

SPECIAL ISSUE SPECIAL ISSUE SPECIAL ISSUE

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[EXCLUSIVE]

BERNER ON FIRE

THE MOGUL ROCKS MANHATTAN

40
UNDER
40

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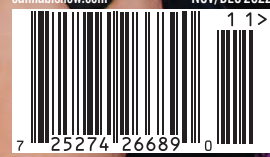
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LEGACY: HALL OF FAME

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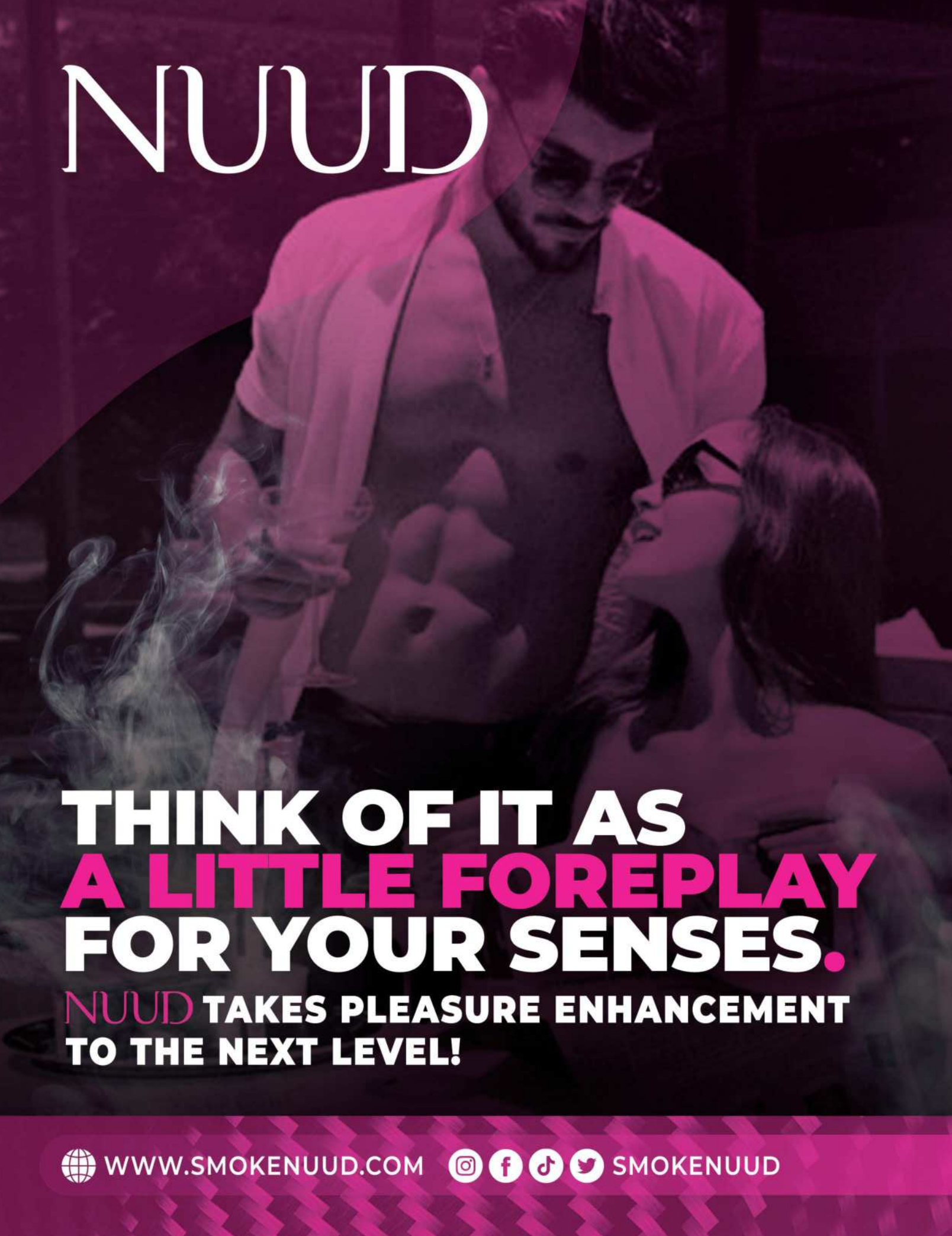
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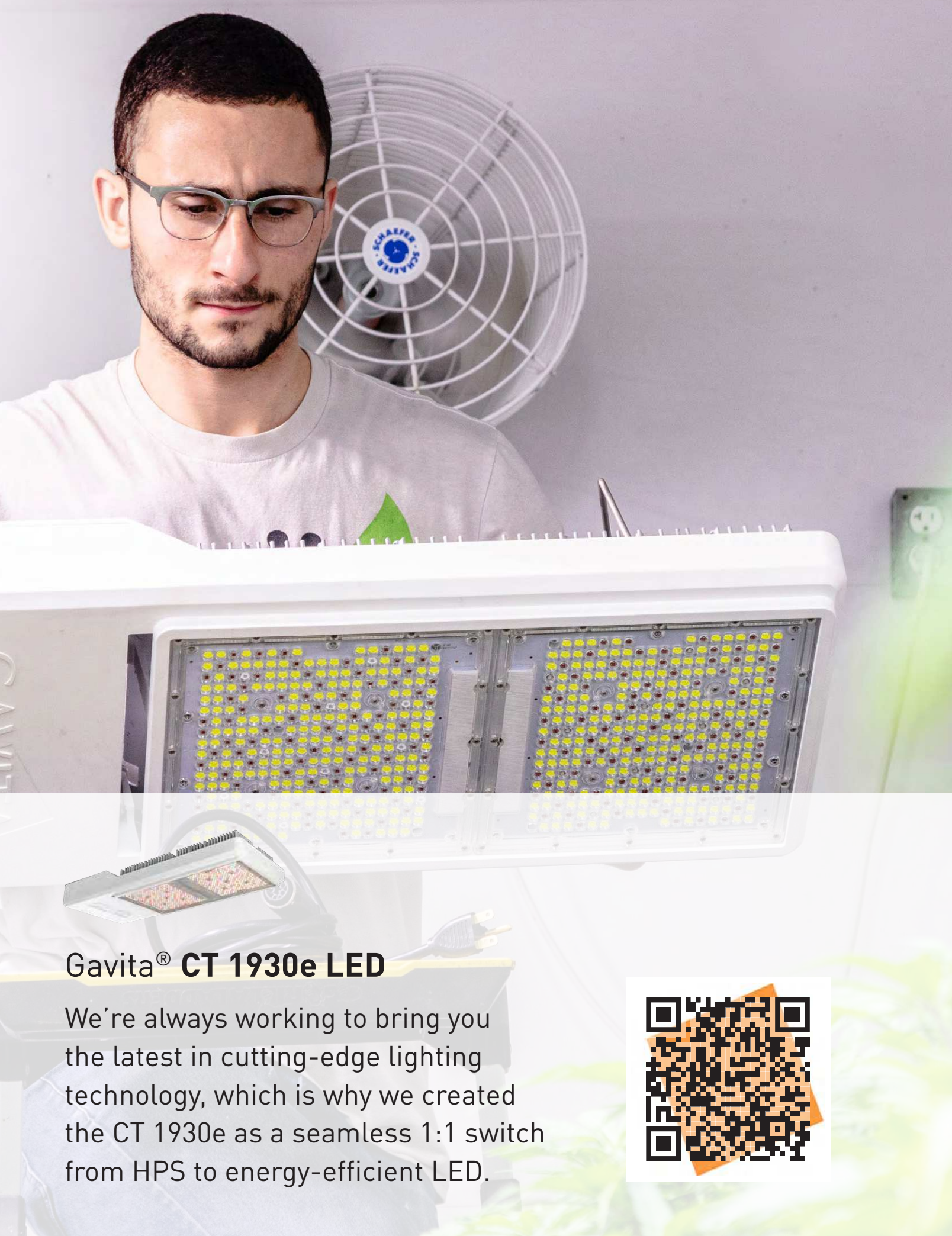
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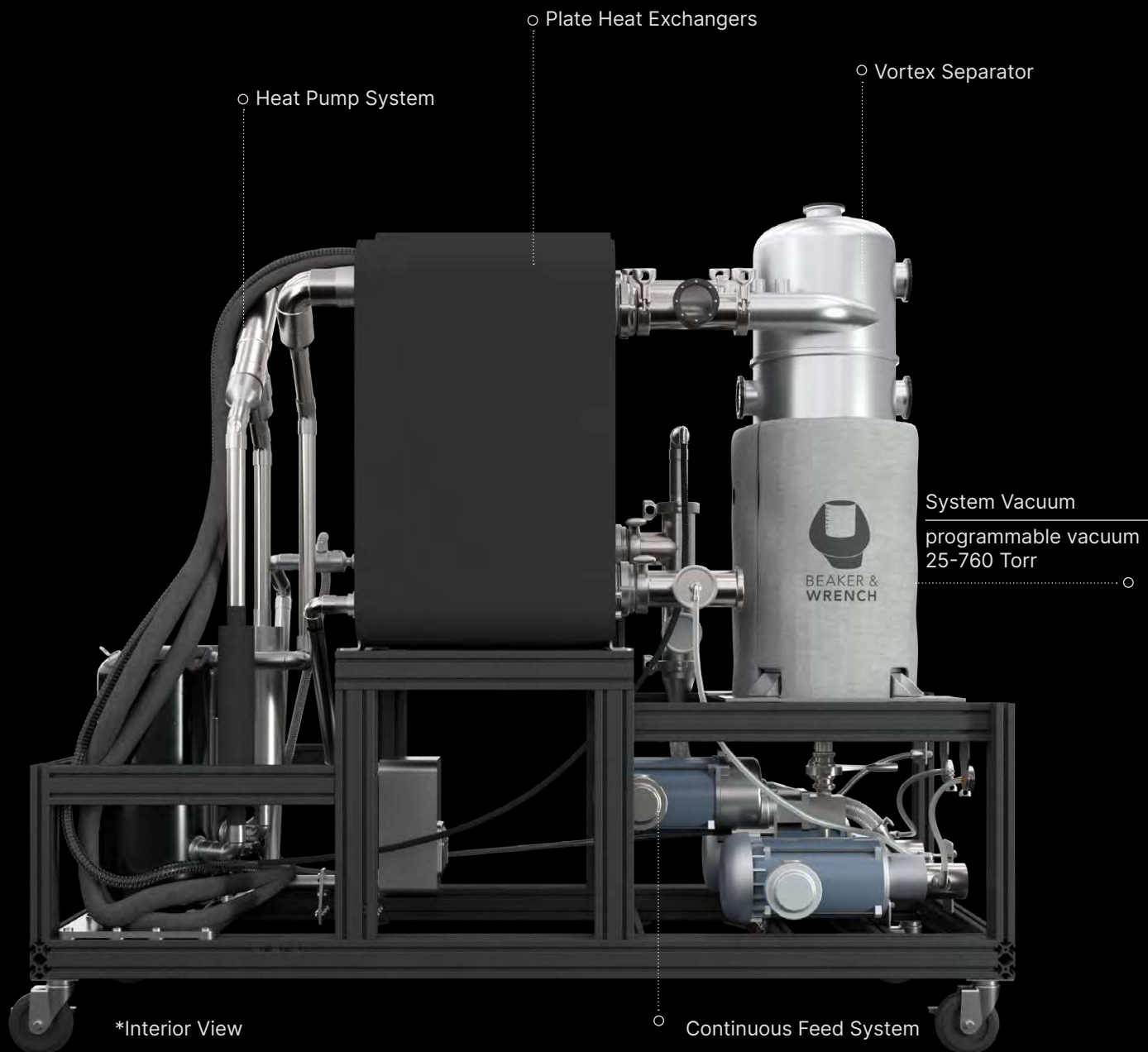
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FIRST HIT

On October 30, 2022, Cookies SF opened a five-story retail and cultural hub at Herald Square in the heart of New York City, welcoming Co-Founder and CEO Berner to Manhattan with an epic celebration. "The energy at the NYC opening was some of the most positive and purest vibes I've ever felt at any of our openings," he said. "I'm very excited about the endless opportunities in this market." 🌿

PHOTO BY BENNY BLANCO





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40 UNDER

28 THE SUPERSTARS, POWER PLAYERS & CANNAPRENEURS

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FASTEST GROWING PRIVATE COMPANIES, THE
LIGHTING JUGGERNAUT'S LEADER SAYS HE'S
JUST GETTING STARTED. BY BUCK WARGO



Weed icon Tommy Chong (FRONT)
visits Brett Stevens (TOP LEFT)
and his Fohse team at
the Paris Las Vegas Hotel.

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DR. RAPHAEL MECHOULAM AND STEVE DEANGELO
ARE AMONG THIS YEAR'S DESERVING HONOREES.
BY MELISSA REID

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Hall of Fame honoree Steve DeAngelo surveys the crowd at SXSW's first official cannabis event in 2019 presented by 'Cannabis Now.'

GOTHAM

ON MY VERY FIRST DAY AS A RESIDENT OF NEW YORK CITY, it happened to be my first day working at *Esquire*, and it was also my 21st birthday. Graduating from Tulane University that very week, I quickly realized that Manhattan was going to be a lot for me. Here I was this seemingly fearless, fast talker from Miami feeling equally excited and apprehensive trying to navigate the fact that I now not only lived in the greatest city on the planet, but also got to work at one of the best magazines in American history.

That same morning, I walked from my apartment in Hell's Kitchen to *Esquire's* offices at 2 Park Avenue—no small feat. I made that long, exhilarating trek crosstown every weekday for the better part of two years, always stopping at the same coffeeshop on 35th Street and 6th Avenue near Herald Square, to order the same thing: large, iced decaf coffee to go. I remember feeling so cool ordering that.

When *Cannabis Now* Founder and Publisher Eugenio García first showed me the images of Berner from the recent Cookies SF launch, I nearly leapt out of my chair, instantly realizing the location of the company's five-story NYC HQ is on the same corner as my go-to coffeeshop from all those years ago. Right then, that unmistakable, this-is-what-a-full-circle-moment-feels-like realization washed over me. And I didn't hate it. Cookies SF's move to the globe's most intoxicating metropolis feels right, feels important for New York, yes, but also for the cannabis industry. Since all boats rise in the tide, Berner's red-hot success is a win for all the players playing the game. As they say about this high pressure city, if he can make it there...

But Berner is hardly alone when it comes to success stories. In this special issue, we're featuring "40 Under 40" honorees, identifying the cannapreneurs, superstars and power players in the industry whose influence is as palpable as it is unassailable. Joining Berner on this year's roster are Wiz Khalifa, Bella Thorne, Brett Stevens,

Kevin Durant, Jessica Gonzalez, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Calvin Johnson, Karson Humiston, Seth Rogen and 30 other standouts. It's quite a list. We also induct a baker's dozen for our inaugural "Legacy: Hall of Fame" including Willie Nelson, Steve DeAngelo, Snoop Dogg, Ann Lee, Melissa Etheridge, Ed Rosenthal, Tommy Chong, Dr. Raphael Mechoulam and more.

As a New York-based editor for an industry that historically has been focused on all things cannabis west of the Mississippi—with a particular obsession with California—it's thrilling to see what impact cannabis is about to really have on a receptive Empire State and, indeed, the entire East Coast. Berner's epic opening is but a hint of what's to come.

This special edition of *Cannabis Now* is all about celebrating individuals—be they early entrepreneurs or seasoned pros—who, in turn, elevate the industry we're all so proud to be a part of. With optimism, we must always move the needle forward even as you indulge me one more moment to look back. I suspect Berner's "only in New York" moment will forever now make me crave those delicious iced decaf coffees from so long ago. Enjoy.



Rich

—RICHARD PÉREZ-FERIA
EXECUTIVE EDITOR

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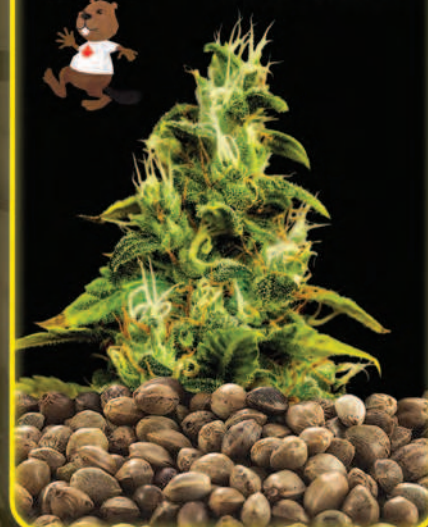


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ON THE COVER

Berner rocks the crowd at Cookies SF's
New York City opening on October 30, 2022.

PHOTOGRAPHED BY BENNY BLANCO

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» Can I Smoke Weed at Work?

Cannabis legalization doesn't mean the freedom to consume cannabis in the workplace, or even full protection from termination from using at home—yet. **BY CHRIS ROBERTS**

» Carbon Dioxide Shortage Impacts Cannabis

A nationwide shortage of industrial carbon dioxide is affecting cannabis businesses

that rely on the gas for their business operations.
BY A.J. HERRINGTON

» New York: The Taming of the “Wild East?”

The Big Apple already sees a thriving retail trade in cannabis products, from both storefronts and street stalls—more or less tolerated by authorities. What legal rights do these unlicensed operators have, and will they survive the imposition of the looming licensing regime?

BY BILL WEINBERG

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NUMBERS
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22%

Women with executive jobs in the cannabis industry, down from 37% in 2017

Number of Americans in millions who'll use cannabis by 2030

71

\$414.50

Dollar in millions California sold in adult-use legal cannabis in September 2022

16.9%

US adults reported using cannabis in 2022

70%

Percentage of US adults who've tried cannabis and say it has a positive effect on society

48

The number of Americans in millions who are current cannabis consumers

91%

Percentage of Americans who think cannabis should be legalized, at least for medical reasons

428,059

Number of cannabis industry full-time jobs in the US through January 2022. In 2021, the industry created an average of 280 new jobs per day

SOURCE:

Marijuana Business Daily

CBD Oracle

Marijuana Business Daily

Leafly

CDC

New Frontier Data

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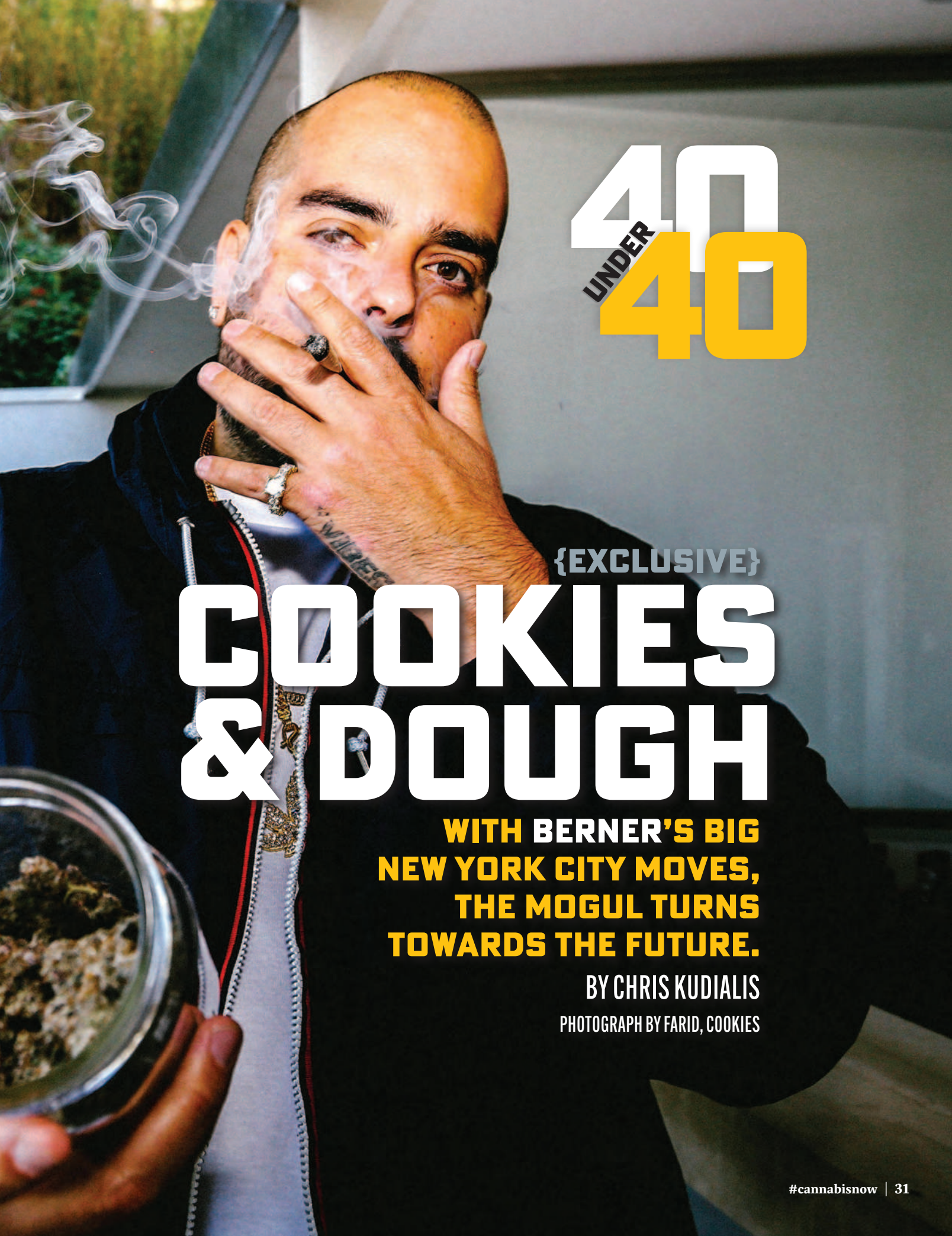
40 UNDER 40

Cannabis Now's inaugural "40 Under 40" special issue celebrates the most influential leaders in the cannabis industry. These young trailblazers have collectively moved the needle in some significant way in the US, impacting millions of prospective consumers. Be they artists, politicians, marketers or business executives, the honorees embody their generation's all-in approach to cannabis: There's no time like now. Given the work ethic and passion evident on this list, the future of cannabis looks bright indeed.

STORIES BY

A.J. HERRINGTON
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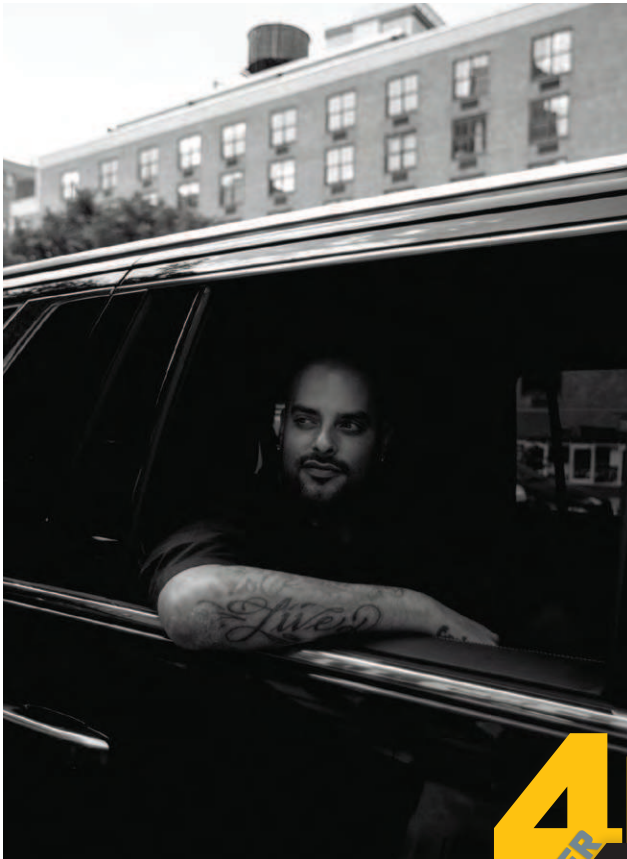
{EXCLUSIVE}

COOKIES & DOUGH

**WITH BERNER'S BIG
NEW YORK CITY MOVES,
THE MOGUL TURNS
TOWARDS THE FUTURE.**

BY CHRIS KUDIALIS

PHOTOGRAPH BY FARID, COOKIES



He always does business in a black long-sleeve T-shirt or sweatshirt paired with matching black denim jeans. A gold chain hangs from his neck, and he occasionally throws on a white San Francisco Giants jersey for good measure. Rock solid, he's clean shaven on top, but rocks a scruffy goatee on his face.

It's easy to mistake the world's most successful cannabis entrepreneur for a villain from the Marvel universe, but Cookies founder Gilbert Milan, Jr. (Berner), is anything but that. He's the legal industry's shining example of how to do weed right.

"I started this brand to have fun with it and just have access to medicine," the San Francisco Bay area rapper and cannabis entrepreneur says, referring to his company's cultivation, dispensary and popular apparel brand, Cookies. "When I look at it now, it's kind of unreal, really hard to believe sometimes."

Launched seven years ago in San Francisco, Cookies got its name from the popular strain Girl Scout Cookies—a favorite for its high THC content and smorgasbord of rich terpene offerings. The essence of the then-32-year-old's new cannabis brand was his undeniable passion for genetics and breeding new strains that produced flavors unlike anything American consumers had ever tried before. Berner had arrived.

Berner takes a joy ride; (RIGHT) the scene at Cookies SF's raucous Manhattan opening in Herald Square in October 2022, during the mogul's birthday weekend celebration.

He says Cookies sourced from across the world—Laos, Thailand, Vietnam, The Netherlands, Spain—to produce groundbreaking strains such as Huckleberry Gelato, Powder Sugar and Undertow. The brand's cult following buys apparel and paraphernalia to the tune of millions of dollars each year, and the baby blue-colored Cookies logo is ubiquitous in legal states: 52 dispensaries and counting across the country. But the heart of the 39-year-old's passion project is in genetics.

"My goal has always been to make sure there's good weed around for the next generation," he says. "There's a bunch of people out there growing terrible weed, but we're growing very precise genetics. We want the world to taste these genetics we're putting into the universe."

Berner's empire has hundreds of employees working across dozens of dispensaries, farms and apparel stores. But he's not just sitting back and watching. In fact, the 39-year-old billionaire still regularly puts in 18-hour days—remaining as involved in Cookies as ever. His latest mission? Expanding the brand internationally.

The clothes are already there: Cookies fans in Asia, Europe, Africa and Australia wear Berner's apparel religiously, as if they were family. Fans from Ireland, Scotland, Spain and Italy covered in tattoos of the Cookies logo surrounded him at the large cannabis

conference, Spannabis, in Barcelona before the pandemic. Excited customers in Jamaica implore him to speak at their smoking clubs and treat him as nothing short of a national hero from the moment he touches down on the Caribbean island nation.

Cookies SF just launched its first store in Manhattan to great fanfare. "The excitement around Cookies being in New York was unreal. Not only did our supporters come out and shut the streets down, some of the biggest legacy players in the space from the east coast came to show

support, which meant the world to me," Berner said.

Given his hands-on leadership approach, when did he realize he finally made it in the cannabis industry? He says it didn't take long after his launch to realize other vendors were copying and stealing Cookies' patented genetics, always the first sign of success.

The other "ah-ha" moments, he says, come every time Cookies moves into a new market. "Competitors scramble to find legacy operators when we move in. They bring in celebrities to promote their brands and stand out. Companies that have been there and are well-established in their markets all of a sudden change strategies and up their game because they want to compete with us. It really makes me realize we're a force to be reckoned with."

Berner admits the hardest part of being a cannabis success story involves the same passion that got him there in the first place:

serving others. The son of a Mexican father and an Italian mother, he takes pride in his SF roots and remains close with the people he grew up with in the Fillmore District.

Cookies partners with multistate operators as well as state-specific cannabis companies, such as Gage in Michigan, to launch its bright



“The excitement around Cookies being in New York was unreal. Not only did our supporters come out and shut the streets down, some of the biggest legacy players in the space from the East Coast came to show support, which meant the world to me.”

blue dispensaries across the country—and soon the world. As more countries legalize cannabis, Berner plans to have stores in Israel, Laos, Thailand, Spain and Jamaica, among other places.

“It’s passion, patience, dedication and understanding how to work with people,” he says. “There’s a lot of different egos, a lot of different opinions and a lot of different views on how to do things, but I’ve been able to adapt and work with every single partner we have.”

That passion for working with people extends to longtime friends, family members and acquaintances. In Berner’s words, he enjoys seeing people “shining” and “winning.” Now that everyone knows he’s a billionaire, the requests for his help come from far and wide.

Berner admitted the demand for his help (and money) was one of his biggest hurdles, because assisting others is “genuinely where my heart’s at.” He realizes he can’t be everyone’s go-to for business endeavors, though, and admitted that saying “no” has been the hardest part of his new reality, a reality that included

Berner becoming the first cannapreneur to ever be featured on the cover of capitalism/billionaire bible, *Forbes*.

But, in a flash, everything changed. When Berner was diagnosed with advanced-stage colon cancer in 2021, he says everything was off the table. “All of a sudden, I didn’t think I was going to make it past 38,” he says quietly. “I was like ‘Man, I’m gonna go out *this* early?’”

After months of intense—which he describes as “brutal”—chemotherapy and plenty of weed, the cannabis icon miraculously went into remission in March 2022 and is now cancer free. As Berner prepares to celebrate his 40th trip around the sun, he says the next chapter of his life will involve plenty more family time.

“I get to see my daughter graduate and hopefully raise more children,” he says. “I’m going to go full hands-on with this [Cookies] for another five years, and then transition into the background and write films, another passion.”

Looks like Cookies ain’t crumbling anytime soon.

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UNDER
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OH, TO BE WIZ KHALIFA

THE BUSIEST CELEBRITY CANNABIS CEO IS
FOCUSED ON THE PRIZE. BY CHRIS ROBERTS

W

hat kind of entrepreneur gives his product away for free? Judging by the decade Wiz Khalifa has enjoyed, a very successful one. (Spoiler alert: He doesn't give *everything* away, and definitely not Khalifa Kush.)

A walking, talking, and—as befits the reputation of a man who once claimed to spend \$10,000 a month on cannabis—smoking embodiment of the requisites demanded by the “slash” economy, in which the line between patron and artist isn't so much blurred as it's one contiguous broad stroke, the musician-slash-businessman-slash-social media-powered marketing machine broke the internet for three solid days way back in 2010, when he chose to release the critically acclaimed mixtape-slash-lifestyle manifesto *Kush and Orange Juice* for free. His winning ethos: partying, hanging out with beautiful women, chasing positive *vibes* and staying extremely high.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY GABE SHADOW

The cannapreneur recently announced Khalifa Kush's latest collaboration with Trulieve, Florida's most powerful cannabis business.



The business genius lay in knowing that gifting his audience content also meant growing his audience, and thereby his dollars. The next year, Wiz Khalifa was riding on top of the *Billboard* 100 with “Black and Yellow,” the addictively catchy anthem paying homage to Pittsburgh—his adopted hometown where his acumen in the recording studio attracted attention from record labels before he was even old enough to drive.

By 2013, the prodigy was generating \$14 million a year, according to *Forbes*, enough to be mentioned in the same top-ten list as other luminaries—and similarly multi-faceted business empires anchored in music—including the likes of Drake, Jay-Z and Snoop Dogg. Of course, there was one major difference: Aside

40
UNDER

from Snoop Dogg, Wiz was the only one doing it while also centering weed. And he was doing it well before cannabis legalization entered the mainstream.

Had he been coming up a decade earlier, that might have been dismissed as too risky of a move by Wiz’s handlers in the marketing department over at his record label. Of course, by that time Wiz had already ditched Warner Bros., his original label, for taking too long to release music and went *independent* via his own label Taylor Gang—and relying on his demonstrated social media virality to do the job a whole floor’s worth of marketing music professionals couldn’t, even if they tried.

Looking back now, centering cannabis wasn’t a conscious or calculated decision, Wiz tells me candidly. It was just who he was and what he was about—and what he believed to be right and true. “It really wasn’t a choice, just how I came up and the lifestyle,” he insists. “I’m like, ‘This really isn’t that bad of a thing.’ People thought I was crazy putting weed on YouTube on college campuses, but that’s just what it was.”

More than a dozen years later, the man born Cameron Jibril Thomaz outside a lonely North Dakota US Air Force base remains as omnipresent and as squarely on the cutting edge of just about everything there is in popular culture.

And I do mean *everything*: In between demanding real estate, in popular video games while also dropping new music in the Metaverse; collaborating with fellow Yinzer Girl Talk and other producers on *Multiverse*, his seventh album released in

July 2022; organizing a free concert; critiquing other rappers who claim to wear expensive outfits once before moving onto the next fit—“not a flex,” Wiz said and praising President Joe Biden’s potentially revolutionary first step towards federally rescheduling (or, maybe, finally, legalizing) cannabis, Wiz visited Florida to launch the latest collaboration selling his eponymous Khalifa Kush—this time in concert with

Trulieve, the Sunshine State’s most powerful cannabis business empire. (Along the way, he’s also studied Brazilian jiu-jitsu and Muay Thai kickboxing, and is raising his nine-year-old son, born when Wiz was married to the model and media personality Amber Rose.)

Whew. That’s more of a lifetime to-do list than it is a résumé, but it’s all there. How does the hip hop superstar stay focused on

so many lanes all at once? He doesn't, at least not with any kind of one-at-a-time tunnel vision.

"They all feed each other," Wiz said in between a flurry of meetings and appearances. "I love making music and I love the companies I've created. I've built a trusted team around me, that knows the vision and knows how to make shit happen."

Of course, as a brand and as a reputation grows bigger, the bigger the risk of dilution. Perhaps nowhere has this been more prominently and more keenly felt than in commercial cannabis, where industrial-scaled offerings from Big Weed continue to struggle to compete with tax-free, cottage-industry grown traditional market fire. Trulieve grown-and-sold Khalifa Kush will avoid that trap, Wiz assures me, in part because he has inserted himself into the quality-control process, as any true aficionado would.

"We only partner with people that we know we can trust, and that give our genetics the love they need," he says. "I've been smoking KK for more than a decade, and it's the same thing we put in jars and grown with the same love... it doesn't get more authentic than that."

As for other celebrity cannabis brands and their struggles to break into and stay in a competitive industry, Wiz isn't all that concerned.

"There's a ton of room in the industry for other people to do what they do," he said. "We focus on putting out only the highest quality products using our exclusive genetics. We just dropped our second strain ever, Khalifa Mints, a cross of KK x The Menthol. We have a bunch of new genetics on deck to launch over the next year and beyond. We're working more than a year out at this point. It's all about the strategy and patience for us."

Someone this busy and this successful might have his very own joint-roller in a swollen entourage, but as befits someone who took heat for a fashion ensemble that's more athleisure than it's runway-ready, Wiz says he keeps it simple.

"I usually grind and roll myself, but if I'm extra busy I've been prepping cones ahead of time so I'm good for a couple days," he says. "If you follow me on social media you know I'm always rollin' with it."

After celebrating his 35th birthday in 2022, Wiz Khalifa still has a few years of growth to go before the mid-life landmark of 40. As for what the next couple of trips around the sun will entail: well, probably more of the same, with whatever else is new and good thrown into the mix. Twitter, Metaverse, Instagram or something else entirely: With Wiz Khalifa, what you see is what you get, and the formula seems to be working just fine.

"When you're visible it's important to set an example using your platforms," the talented Khalifa says. "I focus on being a good dad, raising my son the right way, working hard and taking the stigma out of being a stoner."

After all, he says, "everyone smokes weed."

**"If you follow me
on social media then
you know I'm always
rollin' with it."**



BRETT STEVENS LIGHTS IT UP

AS FOHSE EARNS THE NO.19 RANKING
OF FASTEST GROWING PRIVATE COMPANIES,
THE LIGHTING JUGGERNAUT'S LEADER
SAYS HE'S JUST GETTING STARTED.

BY BUCK WARGO

PHOTOGRAPH BY KEENE DADIAN

Brett Stevens, founder and CEO
of Fohse, hangs with his dog Jax,
a seven-year-old Akita, in the
company's showroom in Las Vegas.



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40
UNDER
40



40 UNDER

A poster of a Lamborghini on his childhood wall says all you need to know about Brett Stevens. The man knows what he wants and gets it done. The CEO and co-founder of Fohse, the white-hot lighting company that has wowed the cannabis industry and made Stevens nothing short of a rock star, drove up to his office on his day off in a \$550,000 silver Lamborghini with his girlfriend. Somehow pulling off the look consisting of turquoise shorts, brown sandals and black Fohse T-shirt, the not-quite-yet-40-year-old isn't resting on any laurels. Despite his undeniable success at Fohse, he still puts in the time and clearly wants more.

Stevens came into an industry that was pre-set and showed how it could be done differently with best-in-class standards and the results are self-evident: Cannabis growers seemingly cannot get enough of Fohse lighting for cultivation.

Calling itself the future of horticultural science and engineering, Fohse is the leading manufacturer of high-performance LED grow lights that increase productivity from 30 to 60 percent. And Stevens isn't stopping at cannabis. He and his team are developing technology that he expects to boost food production around the world. That, of course, would be a global game changer.

Born on a military base, the son of a US Marine, the Stevens family, which consisted of nine siblings, moved from the sunshine of San Diego to an Iowa farm when he was ten.

They raised pigs, cows, horses, ponies, chickens and grew wheat, hay and leased land for soybean production. Stevens grew up with a strong work ethic crystallized by his ritual of getting up at 5am during his middle school and high school years to clean pig pens and any number of farm chores. In the summer months, Stevens worked in the fields.

Stevens' roots as an entrepreneur started early and at 21 he opened a club and soon bought another. He eventually sold them and used the profit to pursue his passion to fight mixed martial arts. It took an injury and finding a fighter to take his place in Ireland where he made a couple of thousand dollars before he realized that he could manage fighters (and not get beaten up in the process). It was his first multimillion-dollar company he started in his early 20s which he again sold in 2007.

Stevens went back to fighting, managing fighters and doing other ventures before seeing another business opportunity a decade ago to sell makeup at music festivals under the brand Plur.

All the requisite late nights, the heavy partying and constant traveling by bus across the county took a heavy toll on Stevens.

He moved to Las Vegas in 2014 and pressed "pause" to all of the eclectic madness when some friends got busted for weed and went to prison. With the money he made from his makeup business, Stevens contemplated his next move.

"We always wanted to get into cannabis," Stevens tells me as we sit in his Las Vegas office. "We've been working in the cannabis industry essentially while we were doing other things, and that's why they got arrested."

In 2015, Stevens launched Fohse. It came about from investing in a local motorcycle shop when he met someone in the cannabis industry seeking a medical license in Nevada. Stevens invested \$1 million to build an indoor cultivation facility only to discover that Ben Arnet, an acquaintance of mutual friends, invested his money too. They would eventually hook up to launch Fohse.

"We knew right away that we're pumping all the AC in the room just to cool the lights down and why don't we just run an LED light," Stevens said. "LEDs are the future, but there were only two or three companies making them at the time."

When they first tried the LED lights, which didn't work to their satisfaction, the business partners looked for a solution. They turned to an inventor friend of Arnet in Minnesota for a light that was high power, low energy consumption and would run cool below 100 degrees—what was considered a unicorn and took two years to come up with a fixture in 2017. At the time, everyone was running into the market with a cheap light that fell apart, but Stevens said they wanted to bring the industry something that would create value.

"We both divested from everything we had," Stevens said. "We sold our cars and lived in a house where we worked together. It took millions of dollars to get this company off the ground, and the only people putting

Fohse President Ben Arnet (LEFT) and CEO Brett Stevens (CENTER) examine plants at The Grove alongside Director of Cultivation Mike Howard.



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money in it were Ben and me. We put \$2.6 million into the company before we even saw a dollar back. We put all of our chips in and then sat there and waited.”

And what a wait it was.

“We knew we were coming in with something that was market disrupting, and we knew we were coming to the market with the most high-end and premium fixture in the world,” Stevens said. “We put a ton of time and money into testing everything. It’s a 1,500-watt light that nobody had anything like in the industry.”

Fohse’s first sale in 2017 was a \$21 million contract in Canada spread out over four years. Overall, the company delivered \$14 million in lights in 2018, \$28 million in 2020, \$40 million in 2020 and \$50 million in 2021. The company is on track to do more than \$70 million in 2022 and could soon approach \$100 million, Stevens said.

Today, Fohse works with many large cannabis companies, including those owned by celebrities—NFL player Calvin Johnson, actor Jim Belushi, boxing champion Mike Tyson, singer Toby Keith, actors Cheech and Chong and many others.

All of Fohse’s success came after the founders turned down a \$40 million check for the company before it sold one light. The duo wanted to run the company and weren’t in it for that amount of money, Stevens said.

The Grove, a popular dispensary in based in Las Vegas, utilizes Fohse grow lights with great success.

“The reason why our light is so popular is because it does what it says it’s going to do,” Stevens said. “It actually grows more products than our clients did before. It’s reliable, and it’s built like a tank. It’s not like a cheap private label, but this light has been drawn from the ground up by guys who are insanely passionate about it. We’re not the most profitable company. We could build our projects cheaper and make way better margins, but we don’t want to. We want to make the best product in the world and make sure every single time we hang our lights, people come back and say ‘those are the best lights we ever hung. That was the best investment we ever made.’”

With an eye towards philanthropy, Stevens says Fohse has donated to groups advocating for legalization, but the focus remains on The Last Prisoner Project, an organization dedicated to cannabis criminal reform.

The company is also concerned with the planet as it strives to leave a low- or no-carbon footprint in its wake. Fohse donates a portion of its profits to pro-Earth charities.

And speaking of charitable work, Stevens says Fohse is prepared to help in a more significant way. “We want to go beyond cannabis and feed countries,” he says. “I want to grow kale, spinach, tomatoes, cucumbers and every microgreen ever made and everything that grows. I want to build specific lights

to grow every single specific plant in a way that’s most beneficial to that plant and most efficiently like we’ve done with cannabis. We’re in an organic farm in Nevada, and we’re crushing it right now.”

Stevens was born to be an entrepreneur given his start at an early age and says he’s confident his 18-year-old self would definitely approve of what he’s accomplished.

“He’d say I knew you were going to do it,”

he says with a smile. “I had a picture of a

Lamborghini, and I wanted it from the time I was in fourth grade. From the time I was little, I knew there were things I wanted to do. We struggled growing up. My parents had a lot of kids so for me as the oldest male, I always wanted to help my family. My dad was an entrepreneur. He was a very smart man. He started a magazine company and sold that. I saw him work on the farm and work so hard. I wanted to be the 2.0 version of that.”

Stevens said he—and Fohse—aren’t done yet, not even close. Fohse will always have its headquarters in Las Vegas, he says, but they’re looking at branching out to Florida, and he’s personally considering relocating to Europe next year. Stevens also wants to see Fohse reach \$200 million revenue a year with a \$1 billion exit strategy. He has other goals, too, like his desire to get married.

“I have a lot of things that I’m not ready to say. I have a lot of things I want to do that are big—*big*.”

Stevens is sitting near the top of the cannabis hill and shows no signs of coming down. Brett Stevens is lighting up every step of the way.

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ALEXANDRIA OCASIO-CORTEZ

The youngest woman serving in the US Congress has also been a fervent cannabis advocate. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, the political firebrand known in most American households simply by her initials, introduced the Harnessing Opportunities by Pursuing Expungement (HOPE) Act in

2021 to give previous low-level cannabis offenders an opportunity to have their crimes expunged. The bill didn't pass, but AOC's push for cannabis reform set the stage for President Joe Biden's recent executive order pardoning anyone ever convicted of simple cannabis possession under federal law.

A Democrat from the Bronx in New York City, Ocasio-Cortez said she won't be satisfied until cannabis is completely legal. Expunging previous possession crimes and removing the plant from Schedule I on the DEA's list of banned substances is a start, but her ultimate goal is regulating it similar to alcohol.

"Marijuana should be legalized, and drug consumption should be decriminalized. These are matters of public health."

ANKUR RUNGTA

Ankur Rungta is bringing his experience as a corporate lawyer and investment banker to C3 Industries, a vertically integrated MSO founded with his brother Vishal and long-time friend Joel Ruggiero. After a short career in law and a period of time in finance, Rungta was able to take the knowledge gained there and apply it to the cannabis business.

C3 Industries is active in four states and has raised more than \$100 million into its operations, with a team of 500 and growing. Catering to connoisseurs, C3 Industries focuses on crafting high quality flower and concentrates. Its flower brand is the award-winning Cloud Cover.

"I cut my teeth as a corporate lawyer and investment banker in New York City. I worked at really prestigious—but also very intense firms. It was all about putting in the time, getting the reps, building a skillset and then using that and making it into something entrepreneurial on our own."



40
UNDER



JARED MIRSKY

Simply put, Jared Mirsky is a power player in legal weed's marketing scene. His company, Wick & Mortar has won just about every meaningful recognition in both the cannabis and marketing worlds and is featured in dozens of leading national media outlets. Mirsky's team has been crafting, creating and cultivating cannabis brands for 13 years, and Wick & Mortar

lays claim to being the oldest and longest-running cannabis advertising agency in the country.

Mirsky's secret is dedicating his company entirely to cannabis since he launched his award-winning advertising agency in 2009.

"Standing out in this industry requires being creative. There's so much red tape with federal law and limits on how and where we can advertise. We're constantly pushing the envelope and that has been a huge part of our success."

KASSANDRA FREDERIQUE

Organizations and those in power are striving to raise awareness for the people of color who have long been disproportionately harmed by racial police and imprisonment. Cassandra Frederique has played a significant role in focusing the national drug policy debate on restitution and reparations for the communities that have suffered because of the War on Drugs.

Frederique is executive director of the Drug Policy Alliance, a national nonprofit organization that works to end the War on Drugs, which has disproportionately harmed minority communities, and to create alternatives based on science, compassion, health and human rights.

The Drug Policy Alliance focuses on human rights issues related to drug usage, society and federal laws. The group tackles various issues, including addiction and pursuing compensation for persons who have served or are currently serving prison terms due to drugs.

"Cannabis reform gives us the opportunity to share power, and to disrupt social control."



JESSICA GONZALEZ

BY ZACK RUSKIN



Jessica Gonzalez is one of New Jersey's most influential weed advocates, even accounting for those a little older than 40 years old. A cannabis and trademark attorney at Hiller PC, she became the state's first cannabis professor in 2021 when Hudson County Community College offered her a job teaching marijuana law.

Gonzalez says her advocacy began at family dinner tables circa 2013. She formally became involved in the regulated cannabis industry in 2017. Since then, she's helped shape cannabis policy on the statutory, regulatory and municipal levels.

"I'm grateful that I get to spend my days studying cannabis, teaching about cannabis, advocating for better cannabis policy and assisting cannabis companies," Gonzalez said. "In the end, the common denominator in everything I do is education. Teaching energizes me because I enjoy figuring out how to transmute complex ideas and policies into digestible bits of information that anyone can add to their toolbox."

At HCCC, Gonzalez teaches "Justice In Cannabis," where she makes sure students know they're in a public speaking and advocacy course, not just a history class.

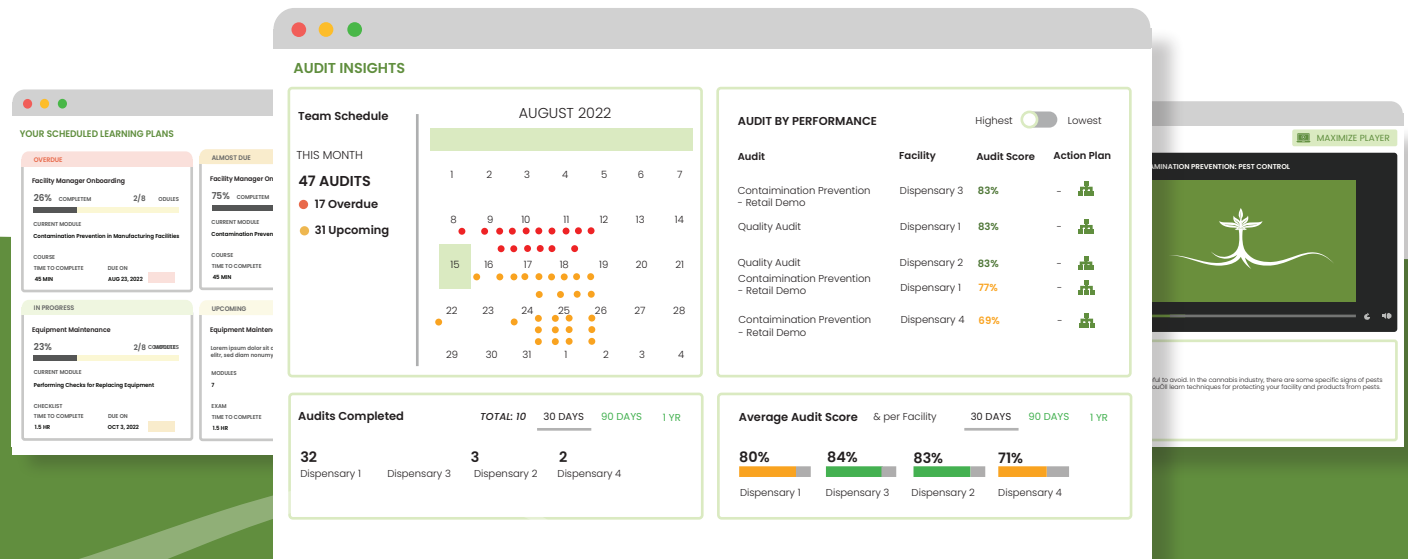
"Seventy percent of my students identify as Latino and Black," Gonzalez said. "Since they come from the communities targeted for cannabis, it's imperative I arm them to become the best advocates they can be for themselves and their communities. I send them to their dinner tables to begin their advocacy, back where I started."

The majority of Gonzalez's advocacy is in the social justice and equity arenas, where she helps forge meaningful pathways for minority communities to participate in the regulated cannabis industry. She led the social impact committee for NJCAN2020, a coalition that oversaw one of the most successful cannabis legalization campaigns in the country.

Her team negotiated lower application fees, non-competitive licensing, priority for minority groups, no caps on licensing and earmarking the majority of taxes for communities ravaged by the criminalization of cannabis.

"As lawyers, we practice without precedent, making it a dynamic, challenging and rewarding space to work in," Gonzalez said. "Given the nascency of this industry, young attorneys have a tremendous opportunity to grow within it, as I did. If you're comfortable practicing withing gray spaces and you believe in the plant, this is the industry for you."

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ALEX LEVINE

Alex Levine thrives in Colorado's crowded recreational cannabis space despite facing a tall task: separating his company from the hundreds of others that operate in the state's competitive Green Rush. Just a teenager when he first started working in legal cannabis back in 2010, he now oversees Green Dragon's 16 dispensaries and 300 employees.

Why weed? Levine recognized the momentum surrounding the plant in the last decade as an opportunity to end prohibition at a scale not seen since alcohol was relegalized in 1933.

Still shy of 30, Levine has spent his entire professional career in the cannabis industry. The expertise he's developed during the past dozen years has helped him grow his company—formerly named Greenworks—from a small operation to one of Colorado's largest cannabis companies.

"For us, it's been about offering premium bud at great prices. We know what people want, and we've always put our patients' and customers' needs first."

ALEXANDER FARNSWORTH

A leader in legal weed's LGBTQ+ community, Alexander Farnsworth owns and operates a namesake posh and boutique dispensary in the heart of Great Barrington, MA, the East Coast's answer to dispensary heaven. The 30-year-old cannapreneur calls his weed store "a museum for marijuana, a palace for pot and a chapel for cannabis." The Farnsworth Fine Cannabis Store has the goods to back it up: Inside, shoppers can find vintage smoking accessories from Hermès, Cartier, DuPont and Tiffany's, along with special artist commissions, crystal pipes, limited edition bongs and one-of-a-kind items such as Jack Kerouac's desk lighter.

"My mission is to put this magical plant on a pedestal and help people understand its value both as a healing medicine and a luxury product that can be savored. I believe it's time to give cannabis the setting it deserves."

40 UNDER

HILLARY PECKHAM

Hillary Peckham's passion for medical cannabis comes from first-hand experience. After some serious medical issues that landed her in bed for two long years, she learned the relief one could find through the power of cannabis. Etain Health, the company she founded along with her mother and sister, is an ode to their late

grandmother who struggled with ALS. Realizing the impact access to medical cannabis could have made on their journey, the family knew pursuing their own license was the right choice.

Peckham says she's pleased to be a life-changing part of so many of their customers' lives. A proud supporter of Women Grow and a member of the Floret Coalition, uplifting the voices of women in cannabis is an important part of Etain's presence in the space.

"Right now, we're the only women-owned and the only family-owned cannabis company in New York and I'd love to see more opportunities for diversity in this industry."

STEVE CANTWELL

Steve Cantwell spent the first two-and-a-half decades of his life defying the odds, so it's not surprising seeing him do the same thing as a cannabis cultivator. The 35-year-old former UFC fighter says he's living his best life as an innovative grower in Nevada's legal cannabis industry. As co-owner and co-founder of Green Life Productions (GLP), along with his wife Kouanin, Cantwell built the boutique indoor farm near Las Vegas into one of the region's most popular cultivators.

Selling to more than half of the Las Vegas Valley's 70 open dispensaries, GLP is known for its superior quality created by a one-of-a-kind growing method. Since launching his grow house in 2015, Cantwell has pioneered and mastered the art of cultivating in no-till living organic soil that has been described as the purest, most natural way to grow cannabis.

"We're the closest thing to nature for an indoor cultivation," Cantwell says. "We don't use any chemicals whatsoever, just the soil's food web. The cannabis we produce is second-to-none because it's completely organic."

"Consumers can always taste the difference, and that's why we've been so successful."

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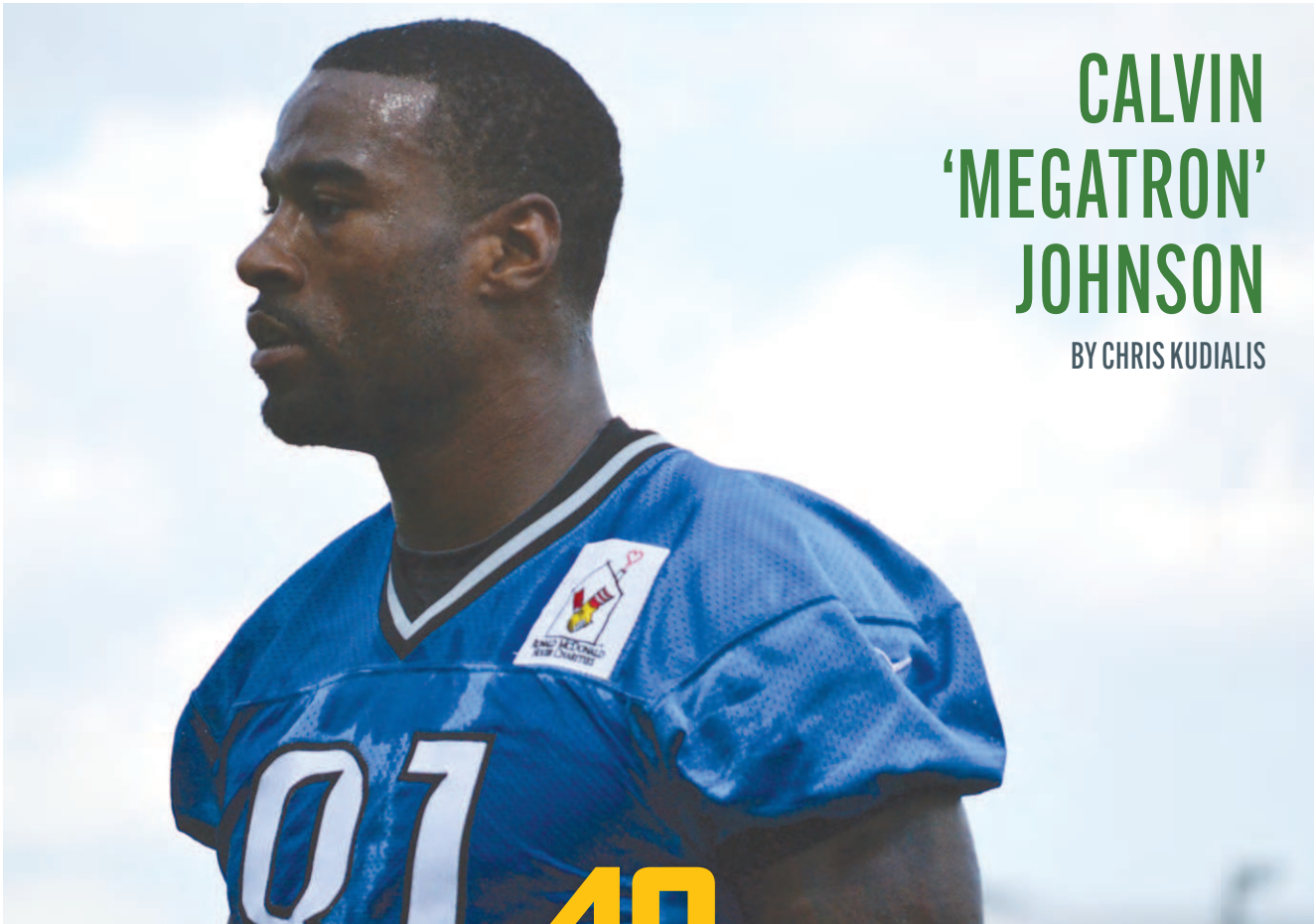


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CALVIN 'MEGATRON' JOHNSON

BY CHRIS KUDIALIS



Before Calvin Johnson slipped on his gold NFL Hall of Fame jacket during 2021's induction ceremony in Canton, OH—long before he wowed millions of fans around the world during a spectacular decade-long career catching passes and running over defenders—Johnson was using cannabis.

Johnson ("Megatron") said he used the plant to clear his mind before taking the field, then again to manage the physical pain when he finished playing or practicing. It worked far better than the team-issued pain pills and injections. Simply put, the man was among the NFL's elite in part because of cannabis.

"Plant medicine is nature's earliest healer," said Johnson, who spent his entire career with the Lions. "It was the most natural and clean way that I could take care of my body."

The problem? The world's most lucrative sports league had a zero-tolerance policy for the plant. Players caught using cannabis—even in weed-legal states—faced four-game suspensions on the first offense. A second offense landed players a year-long ban, and getting popped for the third time usually closed the curtains on a player's career. The NFL has since relaxed its controversial policy, thanks in part to Johnson. But, there's still a long way to go.

Johnson used his 12-minute Hall of Fame speech to elaborate on the "primitive" and "healing" plant that made possible nearly a decade of surviving grueling physical punishment from some

of the world's hardest-hitting cornerbacks and linebackers. The full cannabis comeback story won't be complete, in his mind, until team doctors can recommend and prescribe the plant.

In other words, tolerating weed is a good start for the NFL. Embracing it is the logical—and necessary—next step.

"Everything we need to heal our body comes from the Earth," Johnson said. "I truly believe that. I apply that mindset to everything I put in my body."

Inspired by his passion for the plant and need for healing, Johnson and former Lions teammate Rob Sims opened a cultivation facility in the small town of Webberville, MI, in 2019. The global pandemic stalled the duo's plans for a brick-and-mortar store originally slated to be opened in 2019, but Primitiv dispensary finally launched in 2022 in the small city of Niles, on Michigan's border with Indiana. The dispensary now serves about 400 paying customers each day.

"We're looking at more cultivation options and definitely getting more dispensaries up and running," he said. "We're just waiting for the state [of Michigan] to come around and for the right opportunity to make the biggest possible impact."

Johnson is donating to cannabis research at Harvard University and is an advising member of the Last Prisoner Project, a nonprofit that advocates for cannabis criminal justice reform.



ROSS LIPSON

Michigan native and serial entrepreneur Ross Lipson built one of Canada's largest and most successful food delivery platforms in GrubCanada before selling the company in 2011. Lipson then turned his attention to cannabis, where his impact would be even more profound.

Dutchie is the highest-flying software company in legal weed, with a \$3.8 billion valuation just five years after the company's launch.

Dutchie assists dispensaries in putting their menus online as well as manufacture point-of-sale software: essentially cash registers for weed stores. Lipson's company isn't a payment processor, per se, but rather an all-in-one platform that makes operating in the US legal cannabis industry easier for the tens of thousands of companies doing so.

"I believe that working to solve your customers' biggest pain points and finding ways to deliver them more value is the ultimate driver of any business."

STEPHEN MURPHY

As the legal cannabis industry grew at unprecedented levels last decade for the first time in nearly a century, Stephen Murphy recognized a gap in the flourishing industry: People weren't talking about it on a global level.

Individual states in the US had their own markets, which were separate from Canada's federally legal industry. Legal weed in North America had very little collaboration with markets in Europe, and even less with those in Asia.

Murphy founded Prohibition Partners in 2017 to connect global cannapreneurs. He says his company aims to promote the "abundant economic, societal and health benefits of the plant, so they may be realized by people around the world. When we launched, there was a lack of understanding of what was happening in the cannabis space, certainly outside of North America.

Prohibition Partners now hosts flagship annual conferences in London and New York City. When the company first launched, Murphy said there were 10 legal markets around the planet. Now there are more than 40.



"For us, it was important to showcase that cannabis isn't focused on a single market; it's a global market."

40
UNDER



ERIK ALTIERI

Erik Altieri is executive director of the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML), the country's oldest cannabis legalization advocacy organization—and the youngest person to hold that position since its founding in 1970. The Philadelphia native is a graduate of American University in Washington, DC and

cut his activist teeth opposing the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq after 9/11. He joined NORML as communications director in 2007 and became executive director in 2016.

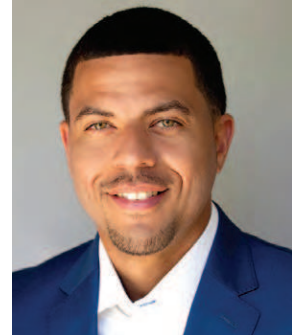
"I'm proud that NORML has remained true to the mission it was founded on in 1970: to advocate on behalf of cannabis consumers. Our work continues to focus heavily on the core goal that we want to end prohibition, so no marijuana consumer is treated as a criminal or a second-class citizen in society. Consumers want access to a product that's safe, reliable and convenient to purchase."

JASON WASHINGTON

Jason Washington dreamed of a career in legal cannabis, but never imagined the roller-coaster journey he'd take. He played quarterback at the University of Montana before an injury derailed his sophomore season, and eventually his promising college athletic career. In 2008, he joined the state's medical cannabis industry. Three years later, Washington co-owned and operated five medical dispensaries and two cultivation facilities as Montana's only African-American owner of a legal weed business.

His dream career turned into a nightmare when the US Drug Enforcement Administration raided his business and charged him with federal drug trafficking offenses. Washington plead not guilty to conspiracy to distribute marijuana but was convicted and spent 17 months in prison. Now, he's back on top of the legal cannabis world as the CEO of Kulture, a cannabis consulting agency.

"For me, it's about the medicinal value and the impact the plant can make in people's lives. As someone who uses cannabis and understands it, I'm proud to be an advocate for the industry."



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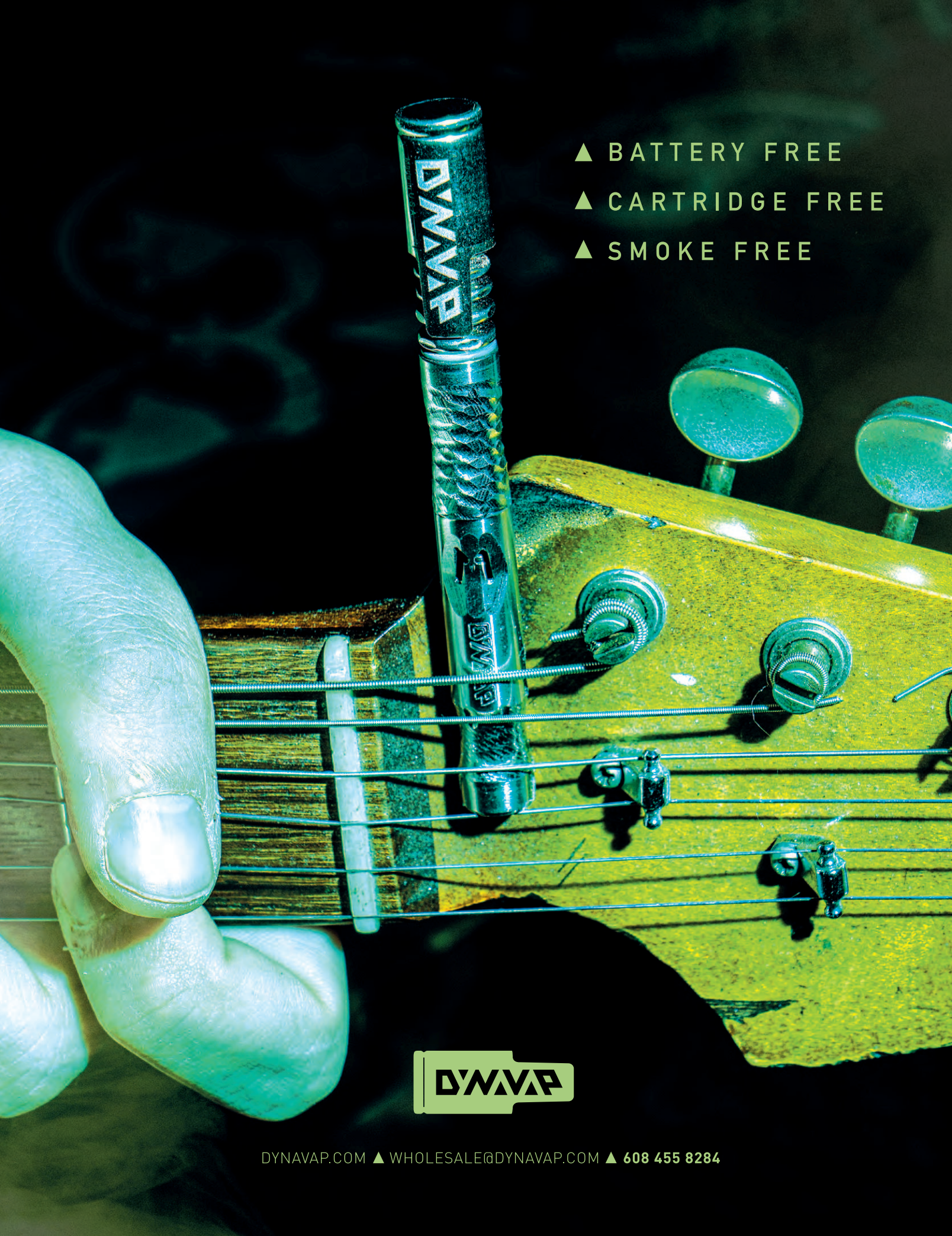
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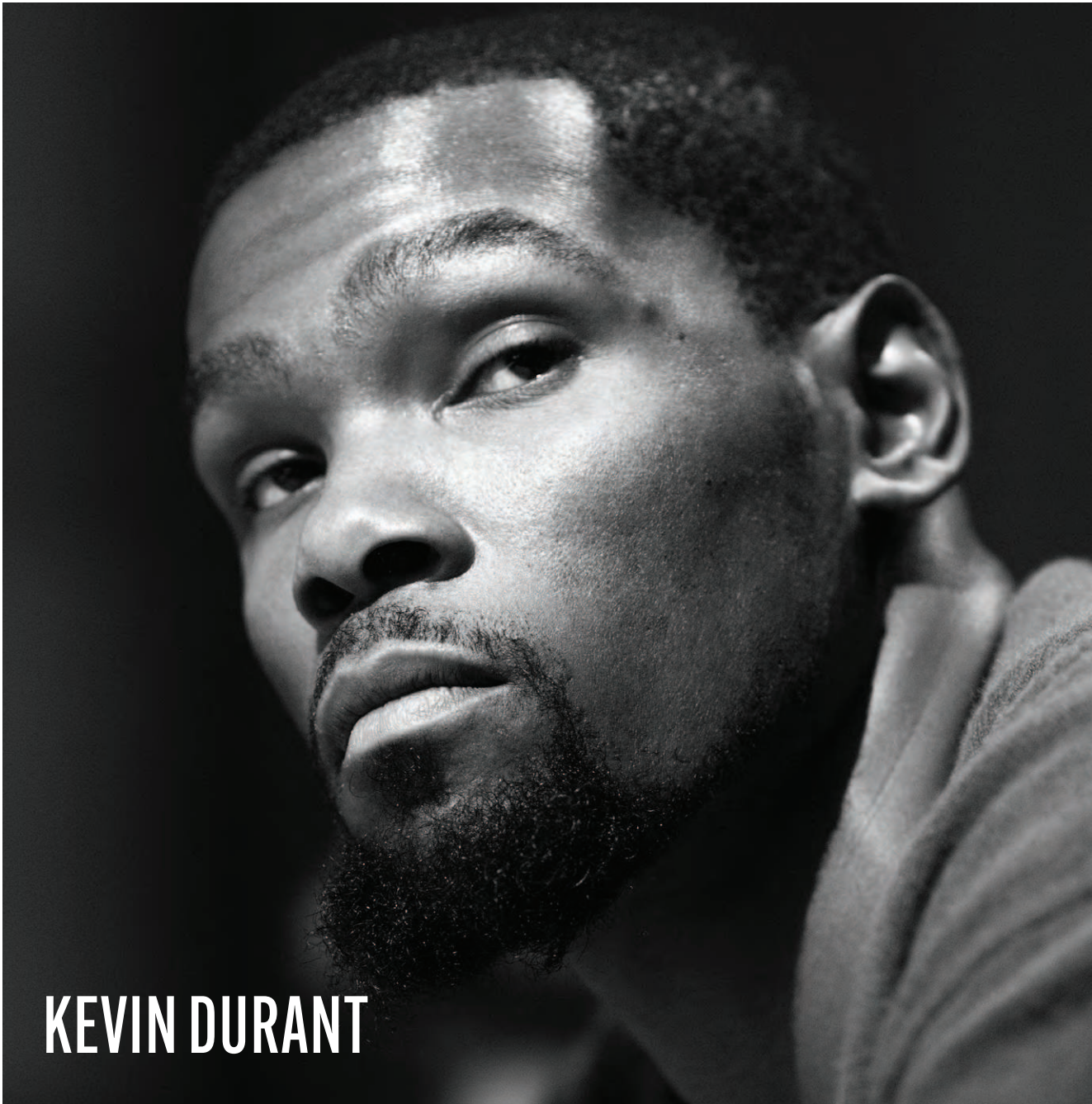
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- A close-up photograph of a hand holding a silver Dynavap pen vertically over the headstock of a guitar. The guitar has a worn, reddish-brown finish and several tuning pegs. The pen has a textured grip and the brand name 'DYNAVAP' is visible on its upper section. The background is dark and out of focus.
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KEVIN DURANT

It's one thing for a former professional athlete to jump into the world of cannabis after finishing their career on the field, pitch or court; it's another for a superstar in the prime of their career to do it. In that sense, NBA icon Kevin Durant stands alone.

A two-time NBA Finals MVP who's still (indisputably) regarded as a top-five player in the league, the Brooklyn Nets standout has publicly advocated for the plant even as prohibition-minded US sports commissioners continue to tiptoe a fine line between federal law and appeasing their players and sheer common sense.

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UNDER

By advocating during his career, Durant represents thousands of athletes who span a multitude of professional sports across the country using cannabis to deal with both the physical and mental challenges of playing at the highest level. The basketball superstar inked a multi-year agreement with Weedmaps in 2021

to serve as spokesman for “powering a transparent and inclusive global cannabis economy.” Durant is also an investor in the popular cannabis platform, Dutchie.

“Marijuana is marijuana,” Durant says. “It’s not harmful to anybody. It can only help and enhance and do good things.”



KEVIN KUETHE

BY OSCAR PASCUAL

A decade ago, a twentysomething personal trainer saw his first cannabis grow and it changed his life. In what seems like moments later, Kevin Kuethe became the chief operating operator of Bloom Dispensary's 30,000 square-foot cultivation center—one of the country's largest legal marijuana operations at the time.

Kuethe eventually moved on from Bloom to help grow two Las Vegas-based companies just as Nevada initiated acts to legalize adult-use cannabis. The 37-year-old currently acts as part of an executive team in charge of the Michigan-based company Lume, which boasts 870 employees across 22 retail stores, as well as 50 acres of outdoor grows and 250,000 square feet of indoor grows.

Kuethe's ascension into cannabis is somewhat confounding, considering his background. With a major in exercise science from the University of Montana, Kuethe harnessed his interests in bodybuilding and physical fitness by working as a personal trainer. His dedication to helping individuals one-on-one eventually built an impressive number of clients, although just one visit to a cannabis growing facility was enough to alter his corporate path.

"My career has been all about following my heart and recognizing good opportunities when they arise," says Kuethe. "Lastly, and definitely not least, is ensuring I have smart and like-minded people around me who share similar drive and passion."

Kuethe's accomplishments have earned the Montana native a recognition at the 2021 Cannabis Conference where he was honored with one of six leadership awards presented to the industry's most influential and successful minds.

"Like any industry, companies in the cannabis space with the best technology will continue to succeed. In cannabis we'll see big advancements in automation, big data, artificial intelligence and most likely genetic engineering," Kuethe says. "Whether this happens in the short or long term is anyone's guess, but I try to be prepared for anything."

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ALLIE CASSIDY

Running a company alongside your husband and dad requires plenty of trust, patience and communication to be successful. Oregon-based Allie Cassidy says that's exactly why she's had so much success building her adult-use and CBD farm TKO Reserve into one of the state's most ballyhooed brands.

Her secret, other than the great working relationships she has with her family? A marketing and branding background that stems back to her days growing up in Las Vegas. Cassidy was posting Instagram videos of life on the weed farm and pictures of marijuana buds "before it was mainstream." She quickly built a following that helped drive TKO Reserve's business in Oregon and beyond.

Cassidy's 60-acre farm, tended to by TKO Reserve's 15 employees, serves nearly 200 dispensaries across Oregon. But while her cannabis business must stay within state lines, Cassidy can legally ship TKO Reserve's CBD products across the country.

"I saw so much room for growth here because nobody stood out as a household name," she says.



MARY BAILEY

As managing director of The Last Prisoner Project that was founded in 2019, Mary Bailey is a heroic and familiar voice in the conversation for social change. Her core belief remains that no one should be incarcerated for cannabis.

Bailey says she's happy to see some of the benefits that have come from weed legalization. Still, she's dedicated to fighting for those who

have been wronged by the criminalization of cannabis—and she expects the same of her colleagues in the industry.

“These people have been displaced from their loving families and forced to live behind bars for their bravery in pushing the plant before a fully legal market existed. I’m also relieved to see the stigma against cannabis slowly shifting, especially for older generations—my grandparents, for one, are fully embracing the healing power of the plant.”

LEO GONTMAKHER

Leo Gontmakher has been fascinated with the cannabis plant as long as he can remember. The Washington State native jumped into the legal weed industry the minute his home state legalized the plant a decade ago and hasn't looked back since.

An OG in Washington's cannabis scene, Gontmakher launched edible production company Northwest Cannabis Solutions, then sold it to Toronto-based Cannex in 2019. Cannex merged with Phoenix-based investor 4Front Ventures and promoted Gontmakher to CEO of the new mega-company. Gontmakher now oversees 4Front Ventures' 600 employees and its portfolio of dispensaries, grow houses and production facilities across Washington, California, Massachusetts, Michigan and Illinois.

“The value of being a true leader in cannabis is pushing forward into the unknown, trusting your gut and allowing those around you to do the same.”



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UNDER



LUKE ANDERSON

Luke Anderson hails from Venice, CA and is co-creator of Cann Social Tonics, a queer-founded leading THC-infused beverage company. While earning his Bachelor of Science at Stanford University, Anderson served

as manager of the campus Jamba Juice, and experimented with “off-menu” (but non-psychoactive) drinks. Anderson later earned an MBA from Harvard, and then worked at the Boston consultancy Bain & Company. He also spent two years as a math instructor with the Teach For America program. Anderson only recently developed an affinity for cannabis and brought a novice palate to the development of Cann's products—designed to be tasty as well as easily digestible, both physically and psychologically. He describes himself as previously canna-curious, but now a convert.

“When micro-dose cannabis beverages are more popular and widely available, there'll be less drunk driving, less domestic violence and less general self-hatred due to the harm done by alcohol to the human brain and body.”

ALISIA RATLIFF

Alisia Ratliff has accumulated a vast amount of scientific knowledge, having developed products and protocols for a variety of scientific industries. As chief executive officer of Victus Consulting Ventures, her transition into the cannabis industry was fueled by the desire to make a positive impact. Ratliff says she never imagined that her career in cannabis would be as far-reaching as it's become and sees the lack of representation in leadership roles in the space and recognizes her role in that regard as well.

“If you've ever watched *Mean Girls*, I love when they refer to Gretchen's hair as being big because it holds a ton of secrets. Well, my hair is also big due to storing so much cannabinoid science and all things related in my brain. From the onset of working in this industry, I didn't just need a career change; I needed to help people.”



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BELLA THORNE

From Disney child star to cannapreneur and CEO, Bella Thorne has undergone quite a transformation.

The actress, director, author, musician and true cannabis enthusiast has never shied away from the fact she started smoking cannabis to help her deal with anxiety and an eating disorder. She says that cannabis “completely changed my life.”

In 2019 Thorne launched Forbidden Flowers, a cannabis brand born out of her passion for the plant. She’s partnered with Glass House Farms, one of the fastest-growing, privately held, vertically integrated cannabis and hemp companies in the US. Green House Farms has one of the most significant indoor grow operations in Southern California.

Thorne wants to break the continuing stigma surrounding the herb—a topic she’s passionate about after her success with weed.

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KARSON HUMISTON

BY A.J. HERRINGTON



Helping firms build a cannabis team is the mission of Karson Humiston, founder and CEO of Vangst, the industry’s leading recruiting platform. While still in college, Humiston’s entrepreneurial spirit led her to reach out to her network of her friends to learn what careers they wanted to pursue. To her surprise, 70 percent of those she asked said they were interested in the cannabis industry. The day after graduation she moved to Colorado and built Vangst from the ground up.

“This was 2015 and the first legal adult-use markets in Colorado and Washington were on the verge of opening up. Every company needed workers. There were tons of jobs about to open up and a lot of interest on the talent side in getting into the business,” Humiston says. “But businesses didn’t know how to reach the talent they needed, or really have the expertise and resources to properly recruit; and the talent didn’t know how to connect with leaders in the industry.”

Since launch, Vangst has created relationships with more than 1,300 cannabis companies. To serve them and the needs of job seekers, Vangst built a recruiting platform that makes it easy for companies to build profiles and post jobs to a talent pool that can upload CVs and credentials to introduce themselves to the industry. Humiston says that when she moved to Colorado, she didn’t have any contacts in the cannabis industry and didn’t know a single venture capital firm.

“But the cannabis community—and it truly is a community—welcomed me with open arms,” she says. “Cannabis creates opportunities for first-time founders like me.”



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MONA ZHANG

Mona Zhang is the cannabis policy reporter for the massive news and political website, *Politico*. A native of the Chicago suburbs who spent her high school years in Beijing and then majored in journalism and East Asian studies at New York University, Zhang got her start in 2015 when she launched her electronic and cannabis-centric

newsletter called *Word On The Tree*. And she never looked back.

The journalist freelanced for a wide range of publications including *Cannabis Now*, *Forbes* and *Vice* before joining *Politico* with the launch of its cannabis policy page. Based in New York City, she's excited to witness the roll-out of the legal market.

"There has been a real lack of accountability and investigative journalism in the cannabis world. As legalization spreads and the industry grows, the need for such coverage only becomes more important."

CHAD BRONSTEIN

Chad Bronstein is a masterful jack of all trades with a background in sports and his hands in the cannabis space and the emerging market of psychedelics. Founder and CEO of cannatech company Fyllo, executive chairman and co-founder of psychedelics brand WeSana and co-founder and chairman of Tyson 2.0, it's fair to say Bronstein is a force to be reckoned with.

Having raised more than \$100 million across the three successful corporate entities, he's determined to leave his footprint on the industry. For Bronstein he says that every day brings a new set of exciting challenges for him to conquer. He's confident that with a strong team and the support of his investors, together they can continue to expand and create strong partnerships with athletes across professional sports, as well as the consumers of the general population.

"You ask me how I do all these things; they're very synergistic. For my success, it's synergies and people. It's about who's behind you, and who's helping you delegate and execute."



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UNDER



MARY PRYOR

Mary Pryor is a powerhouse and a leading voice in the cannabis social equity arena. A Detroit native, Pryor initially entered the cannabis space to find medicine for her mother who had multiple sclerosis.

Soon thereafter, Pryor was diagnosed with Crohn's disease and leaned into cannabis as a natural way to help treat her condition. She moved from New York City to California for easier access to cannabis and was shocked to learn the legal cannabis industry was totally dominated by white men.

Never one to sit back, Pryor decided to act. In 2017, she cofounded Cannaclusive, a consulting agency and collective focused on inclusive marketing and business advocacy in the cannabis industry, with Tonya Rapley and Charlese Antoinette.

Pryor is on the board for The Parent Company Social Equity Ventures, a Curacannabis social equity effort and serves as an advisor and judge for Eaze Momentum Accelerator.

"I'm looking forward to seeing New York take its rightful place as an epicenter in the cannabis space."

ROGER VOLODARSKY

In 2013, from the basement of Roger Volodarsky's mother's home in Brooklyn, Puffco was born with a THC concentrate vaporizer Volodarsky named The Peak. The battery-powered dab rig was the size of a beer bottle and featured a design straight from Silicon Valley.

Since then, Puffco's Peak vaporizers have transformed both the accessibility and experience of dabbing cannabis concentrates—earning Volodarsky's company a cult following and bringing more than \$100 million in annual sales.

Among the vaporizers' features he put into the rig include an AI temperature control system that reacts to the speed in which users inhale vapor. It also features Bluetooth, wireless charging, multiple changing glass and an app for users to control the temperature from their mobile phones.

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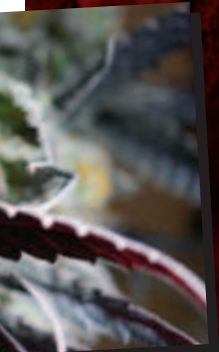
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*Dylan Matteson, owner of We'D,
a Montana Dispensary*

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VICTORIA PLUMMER

Victoria Plummer starts her days with the mantra “be an artist among scientists, and a scientist among artists.” As a strategic product analyst for Lantern since 2020, she’s excited to continue growing in the industry. Plummer

sees her involvement in cannabis as an opportunity to help destigmatize the plant. As a young Black woman, she has first-hand knowledge of the ways the criminalization of cannabis has effected minority communities across the country. She aims to make her presence in the space a positive one.

“My industry knowledge has been growing exponentially, and to be a part of something that’s doing so well, and empowering people through its social equity delivery program is really an amazing experience to be a part of.”

“As a woman of color in the technology space, I also do everything I can to bring laughter and joy to a previously stigmatized industry and love my pursuit in a career path that’s less traditional to women of color.”

JULIA JACOBSON

Julia Jacobson is as passionate about her plants as she is about supporting social justice in the cannabis industry. The tech startup founder turned cannabis farm co-founder is the CEO of Aster Farms, a sustainable craft cannabis company that uses sustainable agricultural practices known as regenerative farming.

What sets Aster Farms apart from other NorCal cannabis farms is the company’s unique terroir and dedication to intentionality, transparency and organic practices. Using live-soil and organic inputs, Aster Farms, Jacobson says, grows clean cannabis the way it’s meant to be, under the sun, moon and stars, for a clean, tasty high.

After graduating with honors from Brown University, she eventually became a tech entrepreneur and co-founded NMRKT, and became its CEO. Jacobson and husband, Samuel Ludwig, relocated from the East Coast to California and began transitioning from the corporate world to cannabis growers. In 2016, along with their friend Noah Cornell, they launched Aster Farms.

“Cannabis isn’t going anywhere. The current state of the industry is volatile, but it has a bright future. Aster Farms is part of that big future.”



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FABIAN MONACO

Anyone who shops for legal cannabis in Michigan knows the name Gage. With 20 current dispensaries and more planned across the Mitten State, the company is perhaps the best example of the industry’s skyrocketing growth during the past three years. Supplying those stores

are a half-dozen cultivation facilities that Gage owns, along with a dozen grow house partners the company draws from.

Gage’s skyrocketing growth wouldn’t have been possible without CEO Fabian Monaco at the helm. A main driver of the company’s success, Monaco attributes impressively high average customer tickets to focusing on selling flower products and Gage’s partnership with California-based Cookies brand. A pair of Gage’s dispensaries in Michigan are simply called Cookies.

“First and foremost, we’re a flower brand. All other products come second to flower. Recognizing that fact and sticking to what we do best has been a huge part of our success.”

JACOB PLOWDEN

Jacob Plowden grew up surrounded by the effects of drug prohibition and watched friends and family around him go to prison. Frustrated by the inequities faced by minority communities in the War on Drugs, Plowden works tirelessly to highlight the lack of diversity and the need for inclusion in the legal cannabis industry, especially for the new generation of minorities.

While at Baruch College, Plowden began his advocacy pathway with Students for Sensible Drug Policy (SSDP), the largest global youth-led network dedicated to ending the War on Drugs, which disproportionately punishes and incarcerates Black and brown individuals. The SSDP brings together young people of all political and ideological stripes to encourage honest conversations about drugs and drug policy.

“I’m passionate about justice in cannabis, because as a man of color, cannabis has always carried a stronger stigma and greater legal consequences for people in my community.”



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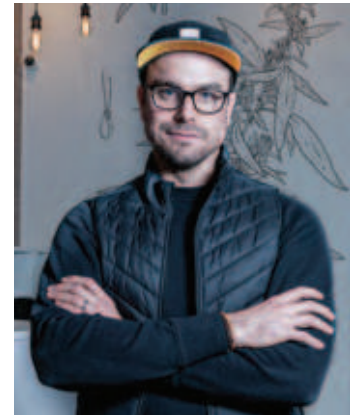
BY XOCHITL SEGURA-GARCIA

Attorney and longtime drug policy advocate Shaleen Title has been fighting the good fight for more than two decades. She's co-founder of the Cannabis Regulators of Color Coalition, an organization that represents state and local cannabis jurisdictions from across the country. Title is also serving as Distinguished Cannabis Policy Practitioner in Residence at Ohio State University Moritz College of Law's Drug Enforcement and Policy Center.

A founding board member of the Minority Cannabis Business Association, Title pioneered state-level legislation focused on reinvestment and reconciliation. Currently an advisor to Supernova Women, a nonprofit that holds space for women of color in cannabis, she's determined to make the cannabis space more inclusive.

"In 2022, the term 'social equity' has mostly played its role and is no longer needed. The concept was so effective that it has been co-opted by companies inventing new corporate buzzwords such as 'social equity for business.' They can have it. It was never about the words we use—it's about addressing the unfairness that people instinctively understand when they look at communities still locked up for marijuana offenses while mega companies rake in hundreds of billions of dollars a year for selling the same product."

"If we want to make the market accessible for small businesses, or even better ensure they're included like they are in the craft beer and wine industries, then we have to strategically make sure that Congress writes intentional laws for them."



THOMAS WINSTANLEY

A decade in the trenches working in marketing at powerhouse brands Pfizer, Under Armour and Rémy Cointreau made Thomas Winstanley a genuine catch for Great Barrington, MA-based thriving cannabis company Theory Wellness.

But why Theory Wellness, a startup weed company with little recognition prior to his arrival in Summer 2018? Winstanley said he saw an opportunity to innovate in the nascent cannabis industry. His impact since then has been undeniable: Theory Wellness has grown into one of Massachusetts' largest dispensary chains while also expanding into Maine and Vermont. During that time, Winstanley has ascended up the ranks from marketing director to VP of marketing in 2020. In May 2022, he became Theory's CMO.

His role with Theory, which boasts a portfolio of flower and production brands in addition to their distinctive brick-and-mortar stores, involves brand and creative development, public relations, media buying, social strategy, operational infrastructure and analytics reporting.

"I have a curiosity in trying to understand people and their habits. I love threading the needle between the art and science of marketing."

SETH ROGEN

BY MELISSA REID



Seth Rogen is Hollywood's favorite—and, arguably, most famous—stoner. Since the massive success of his iconic movie, *Pineapple Express* in 2008, the actor, writer, producer and director has been regarded as one of Tinseltown's most notable weed aficionados. But for Rogen, cannabis is no joke. His passion has become his business, and he's using his platform to promote the herb focusing on education, advocacy and equity with his company, Houseplant.

In 2019, Rogen and his long-time creative collaborator Evan Goldberg, created Houseplant, a cannabis lifestyle brand made with quality flower and features accessories with a modern retro aesthetic. Houseplant offers a wide range of signature sativa, indica and hybrid genetics and a requisite line of pre-rolls.

Houseplant has introduced a new "By Seth" collection that features covetable ceramic pieces made by Rogen himself (a new passion for the actor) and an accompanying range of stylish smoking products for discerning tokers. The range includes tabletop lighters and rolling trays.

Houseplant launched in California with a cool new rebrand to differentiate it from its Canadian counterpart. New York City-based design studios MA-MA and Práctica were brought on to collab on the project, and the finished project was stackable containers that resemble the iconic Lego bricks.

But Houseplant isn't all Hollywood ceramics and sleek design. The destigmatizing of cannabis is something that Rogen is highly passionate and vocal about. To that end, social advocacy is a significant factor at Houseplant. To ensure a diverse and equitable cannabis industry, Houseplant offers programs and partnerships to build community empowerment.

The brand uses its platform to provide education and advocacy to serve the communities in which they operate. Through partnerships with Black Lives Matter, Cage-Free Cannabis and the Marijuana Policy Project, Rogen and the team at Houseplant highlight the human cost of prohibition and push for a just and equitable approach to cannabis across the country.

Policy reform is high on the agenda, too. Houseplant works with policymakers, advocates, drug policy experts and others to discuss the future of cannabis policy and help repair the harms of the War on Drugs.

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TOM ANGELL

BY XOCHITL SEGURA-GARCIA

Tom Angell had been covering cannabis policy and politics for more than two decades. He's the founder of the nonprofit Marijuana Majority, an educational and advocacy organization, as well as publisher and editor of Marijuana Moment. He has reported for a variety of publications and once handled media relations for Law Enforcement Against Prohibition and Students for Sensible Drug Policy. Angell's arguably one of the most informed and respected resources for all things cannabis policy.

After an eye-opening, first-hand experience with cannabis criminalization while attending college, he felt "called" to turn his attention to cannabis advocacy. Despite the struggles cannabis still faces, Angell says that any conversation happening around the subject is overwhelmingly positive. He's clearly seen the demeanor of the political discourse towards the plant change over the recent years, as well as the general public's increasingly positive reactions. But Angell insists that there's always work to be done.

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NADIR PEARSON

You could say that Nadir Pearson represents the future of cannabis.

This multi-dimensional millennial has taken the cannabis industry by storm with his passion for advocacy, content creation and business propensity. An Ivy League alum, Pearson is best known for ushering in a new era of understanding about cannabis and empowering the next generation of leaders to leave their mark on the legalization movement.

Pearson discovered the disingenuous stigma that linked cannabis with minority communities at an early age. The results from his first experience smoking weed when he was much younger were in direct conflict with the scaremongering stories D.A.R.E. had told him about the plant. This newfound knowledge sparked Pearson's interest, and he was determined to learn more. Pearson was inspired to dig deeper, and his journey led him to discover the plant's racist history as well as its medical benefits. The information proved to be a driving force in his future, and he was determined to make cannabis opportunities equitable for brown and Black communities.

Pearson saw the need for a transparent and safe space where college students could learn the whole truth about cannabis. In 2017, while a student at Brown University, Pearson founded SMART (Student Marijuana Alliance for Research & Transparency), a student-led network dedicated to learning openly and honestly about cannabis and its impactful role in our society.

By promoting knowledge, research and professional growth, SMART aims to encourage the next generation to see past the stigma associated with marijuana.

Additionally, SMART supports an open approach to learning about cannabis that balances the industry's positive and negative aspects. The deliberate inclusion of the word "marijuana" in the organization's title serves as a reminder of the *Reefer Madness* propaganda employed by media and politicians to racially vilify cannabis while simultaneously negatively stereotyping brown and Black communities.

A New Jersey native, Pearson currently serves as Deputy Director for NJ NORML and is the East Coast Project Lead for Cannaclusive. "I'm rooting for the passionate, savvy operators and brands that play the long game in cannabis. The ones that stay true to their core values and to the plant. Mergers and acquisitions will come, but there's still an opportunity to build an ecosystem of equity-minded industry leaders."

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Founded in 2018 by serial software entrepreneurs Vince C. Ning and Jun S. Lee—before the first legal sale of adult-use cannabis in California—Nabis has established itself as the leading weed wholesale platform in California. They built the company from the ground up, starting as delivery drivers and moving products to dispensaries across the Golden State. You could say it's the Amazon of the weed industry, and its founders are the burgeoning Bezoses of cannabis fulfillment.

The only end-to-end wholesale cannabis marketplace platform, Nabis offers B2B support between brands and retailers. With its fulfillment, warehousing, payment processing, financing, data analytics, sales and marketing services, cutting-edge technology enables more brands and retailers to innovate, launch and scale.

Scaling the adult-use cannabis market depends heavily on wholesale distribution. With Nabis, brands can use the online marketplace to sell their products so that retailers can quickly place orders for multi-brand, multi-product orders with two-day shipping guarantees.

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Before starting Nabis, the software engineers cut their tech teeth in some of the biggest names in Silicon Valley: Ning worked as an engineer at Microsoft before founding SaaS platform Scaphold, Inc., a software company that would come to be acquired by Amazon. Lee started his career as an engineer at Facebook before founding Allganize, an artificial intelligence company.

Nabis has grown more than 140 percent in volume year-over-year and represents a portfolio of 100 top-tier brands. Nabis now distributes ten percent of California's legal weed—the largest cannabis market in the world. It exclusively supplies more than 200 brands to dispensaries across the state, shipping in excess of \$350 million in cannabis products annually. In 2021, Nabis secured \$23 million in Series B venture capital funding with investments from Twitch founder Justin Kan, legendary NFL quarterback Joe Montana and Gmail creator Paul Buchheit.

Nabis is eyeing up the red-hot New York market and intends to apply for a distribution license as the Empire State awards licenses before launching its imminent adult-use cannabis market. 



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At Horizon Lift, now more than ever, we realized how extremely important it is to get more out of your lighting investment and reduce your operating cost. We set out on a mission to find the solution and asked ourselves the question, "How do we do this?". It all came down to one simple and repeatable process, "YOU GOTTA MOVE YOUR LIGHTS!!". After spending more than 13 years in the light lifting category, we knew we had the experience and innovation to come up with the right solution, which today is known as our uniquely designed Horizon Lift – Light Mover (patent pending). Horizon Lift Light Movers take the light source to the canopy giving the grower the ability to Lower, Level and Lift lights in seconds, reduce energy cost, reduce labor time and improve your growing output.



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The proper positioning of your lights closer to the canopy will optimize your coverage while allowing you to hit your target PPFD for any cycle. Horizon Lift Light Movers makes this process a whole lot easier.

It takes just seconds to lower or lift your lights to the correct height and get more out of your lighting investment.



Get *accurate* readings

All growers know that the efficiency of the grow and the quality of what is harvested is dependent on how you control your plants environment and getting accurate readings. But it's also about how quickly you can adjust those readings to take your crop to the next level. For example, LST (Leaf Surface Temperature) readings play an important part in controlling your plants health. Using Horizon Lift Light Mover to be able to quickly adjust your lighting's heat closer to or away from the canopy has now become as simple as pressing a button on your phone and puts the control back into the growers hands.



Safety & Cost

Adjusting lights by hand is time consuming and costly. It used to take hours to set up ladders to manually make weekly adjustments and to move lights out of your way for harvesting and room cleaning. Now it can be done in seconds! Using Horizon Lift Light Movers not only reduces the time it takes to adjust the height of your lights but also increases employee safety by eliminating the need for ladders. Horizon Lift Light Movers are easily operated via our mobile App, so it keeps your employees on the ground where everyone benefits. Another costing factor to consider is having to rebulb for HPS/CMH Lights. On average a grower can spend approximately 75% less time to change out bulbs using Horizon Lift Light Movers. Imagine the cost savings.



What's in the box?



Why you *need* it!

Here at Horizon Lift we designed, engineered and produced a product that has more features and benefits that the indoor growing could list. We've done the work for you. Horizon Lift Light Movers provides optimum PPFD and Leaf Temperature goals during the last 10 weeks of the grow cycle. If you are not utilizing these two goals in your grow, you are missing out on the opportunity to produce double digit increases in dry weight production (Example: Novik Industries, Portland Oregon, 19% increase).

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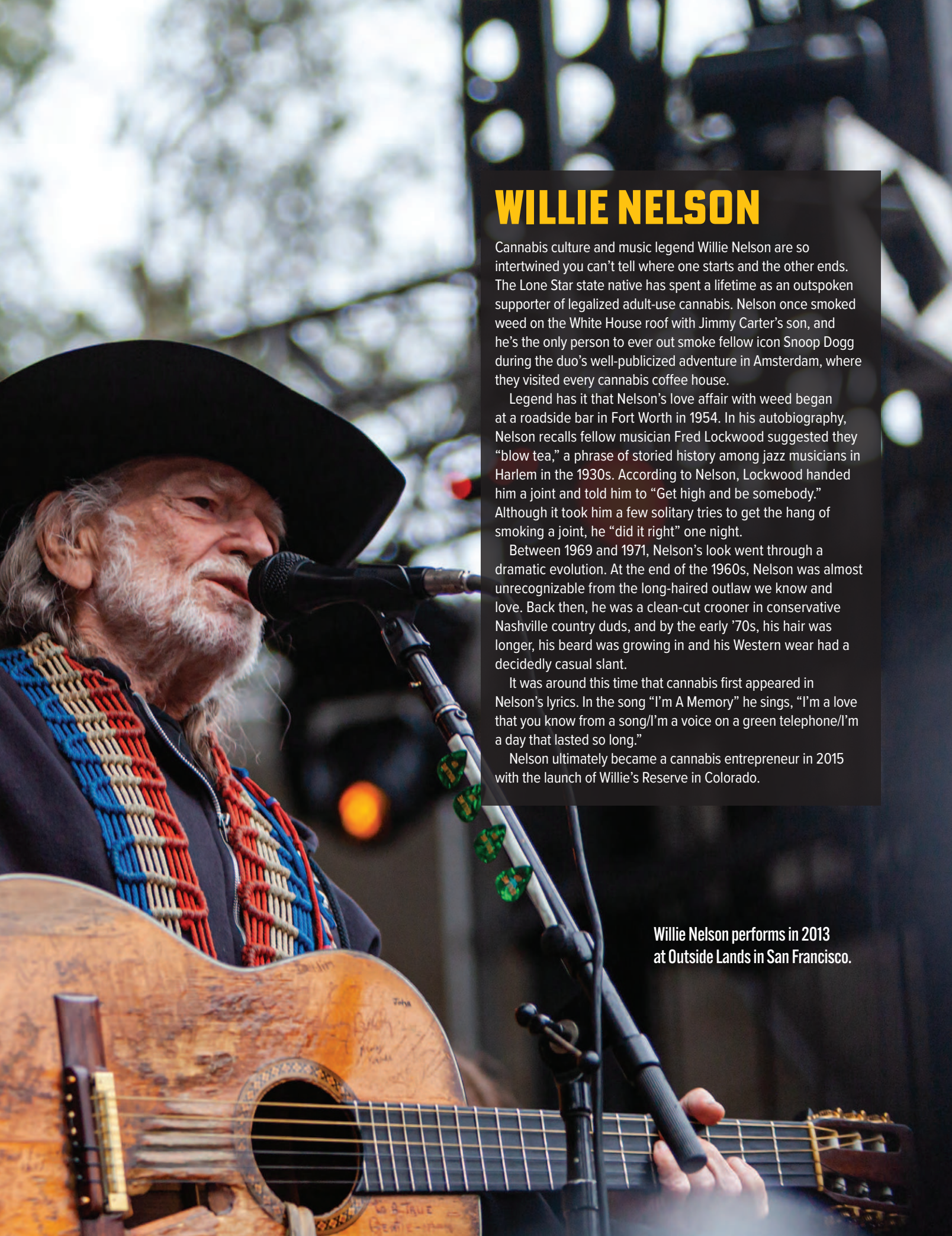
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LEGACY HALL OF FAME

Willie Nelson, Snoop Dogg and Tommy Chong may be some of the more obvious honorees for *Cannabis Now's* Legacy: Hall Of Fame, but they're hardly alone. Cannabis giants Dr. Raphael Mechoulam, Ed Rosenthal, Dale Sky Jones and Steve DeAngelo also make the cut. What follows is a veritable cannabis Mount Rushmore of legends who have all made massive contributions to the education and celebration of the herb.

BY MELISSA REID

PHOTOGRAPH BY GRACIE MALLEY



WILLIE NELSON

Cannabis culture and music legend Willie Nelson are so intertwined you can't tell where one starts and the other ends. The Lone Star state native has spent a lifetime as an outspoken supporter of legalized adult-use cannabis. Nelson once smoked weed on the White House roof with Jimmy Carter's son, and he's the only person to ever out smoke fellow icon Snoop Dogg during the duo's well-publicized adventure in Amsterdam, where they visited every cannabis coffee house.

Legend has it that Nelson's love affair with weed began at a roadside bar in Fort Worth in 1954. In his autobiography, Nelson recalls fellow musician Fred Lockwood suggested they "blow tea," a phrase of storied history among jazz musicians in Harlem in the 1930s. According to Nelson, Lockwood handed him a joint and told him to "Get high and be somebody." Although it took him a few solitary tries to get the hang of smoking a joint, he "did it right" one night.

Between 1969 and 1971, Nelson's look went through a dramatic evolution. At the end of the 1960s, Nelson was almost unrecognizable from the long-haired outlaw we know and love. Back then, he was a clean-cut crooner in conservative Nashville country duds, and by the early '70s, his hair was longer, his beard was growing in and his Western wear had a decidedly casual slant.

It was around this time that cannabis first appeared in Nelson's lyrics. In the song "I'm A Memory" he sings, "I'm a love that you know from a song/I'm a voice on a green telephone/I'm a day that lasted so long."

Nelson ultimately became a cannabis entrepreneur in 2015 with the launch of Willie's Reserve in Colorado.

Willie Nelson performs in 2013
at Outside Lands in San Francisco.

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With a larger-than-life personality on par with his 6'7" frame, Mike "Big Mike" Straumietis is one of the captains of the cannabis industry. The successful entrepreneur and businessman is the founder of Advanced Nutrients, the world's No.1 cannabis nutrient company. Since his first foray into cannabis in 1983, Straumietis has overseen the cultivation of millions of cannabis plants, fueled by a passion for helping growers in more than 100 countries around the world grow the biggest, stickiest, most sparkling buds possible.

Straumietis is vocal in his belief that cannabis has the power to heal, a fact mirrored by his passion for research on the plant's genetic potential. He has held a license to study cannabis in Bulgaria for nearly two decades. He credits his world-class team of in-house scientists (including many Harvard and MIT grads) for giving him the competitive edge over his competitors.

After cannabis, Straumietis' other passion is philanthropy, specifically, social change. He believes all profitable corporations are responsible for giving back to their communities. He started his charity work in Bulgaria in 2012 as "Holiday Heroes" to give back to the country that has supported him. His nonprofit, Humanity Heroes, is a rebranded version of Holiday Heroes based in Los Angeles.

"It's important that we come together as a voice and that people understand that cannabis isn't just a bunch of people running around and getting high," Straumietis says. "We're a serious business, a serious community and we must be taken seriously—it shows a different side of cannabis than what people think."



ANN LEE

Republicans Against Marijuana Prohibition (RAMP) founder Ann Lee is an unexpected ally in the fight against prohibition. Lee recognizes that the basic principles of the GOP—smaller government, fiscal responsibility and individual accountability—are simply not in line with the outdated conservative views surrounding cannabis legalization.

Lee was raised in the small Louisiana town where she recalled the racial segregation she experienced growing up in the Jim Crow South. At the University of Texas at Austin she met her husband, Bob, and the two would later co-found RAMP.

In 1990, a catastrophic accident left Lee's son Richard paraplegic. Through research, Richard learned about cannabis' potential use as a treatment for his

excruciating nerve pain. Up until that point, Lee used to think of cannabis as a risky "gateway drug," however, she now acknowledges the very clear medical advantage that cannabis provided her son.

Those in the know may already be familiar with the name Richard Lee, and for a good reason. After relocating to Oakland in 1997, Richard established the renowned Oaksterdam University a decade later, which today provides cannabis classes and expert training for careers in the legal industry.

**HALL
OF
FAME**

ED ROSENTHAL

You can credit Ed Rosenthal as the man who made US cannabis the best in the world. In 1974, he and Mel Frank coauthored *The Marijuana Grower's Guide*, and within a few harvest seasons, America's legions of devoted pot growers had grown, somewhat covertly, from coast to coast. Since then, Rosenthal's *Marijuana Grower's Handbook* has become the go-to guide for cannabis production, inspiring many to learn the best cultivation methods.

Known to many as the Guru of Ganja, Rosenthal's books serve as Oaksterdam University's official textbooks. He also teaches students various methods for increasing the output and effectiveness of their gardens.

Since the first publication of *The Marijuana Grower's Guide*, Rosenthal has written a library's worth of books on cannabis and cultivation. Widely regarded as the world's leading expert on the cultivation of cannabis, he has sold well more than a million copies of his books, including *The Big Book of Buds* series: *Marijuana Garden Saver*, *Best of Ask Ed* and *Marijuana Grower's Handbook*.

Rosenthal is more than a well-known author and expert in cannabis horticulture. He's a social activist who supported legalization early on, aggressively campaigned and created civil regulating policies for medical marijuana.

After California's groundbreaking Proposition 215 authorized medical marijuana for therapeutic purposes in 1996, Rosenthal collaborated with the federal, state and municipal governments to administer the distribution of pharmaceutical-grade cannabis to patients with a doctor's authorization to consume cannabis. In 1999, he was appointed "Officer of the City of

Oakland" and directed to cultivate cannabis for patients.

In 2002, he was arrested for the cultivation of cannabis by federal agents. The feds didn't recognize the authority of states to regulate the use of medical marijuana and shut down his city-supported facility. Rosenthal was found guilty, but some jurors questioned their decision after learning that he was representing the City of Oakland, information hidden from them throughout the trial. In 2006, the 9th Circuit Appeals Court overturned Rosenthal's conviction. But the feds weren't finished. Months later, he was reindicted, and once again, the jury was kept from hearing the information that Rosenthal's operation was sanctioned by Oakland officials. He received no additional jail time.

HALL OF FAME



Dale Sky Jones has spent the last decade advancing the discussion surrounding cannabis policy reform in her role as president and CEO of Oaksterdam University in Oakland, CA. Her cannabis career started in medical marijuana in Orange County after growing disheartened with corporate America. Ironically, this experience would allow Jones to understand the complexities and checks and balances required in the legal cannabis industry.

A pioneer in the field of cannabis education, Oaksterdam University provides high-quality training for the cannabis sector and serves as the model for national cannabis research initiatives launched by other academic institutions. More than 70,000 alumni from more than 100 countries have become the most active corporate leaders and professional advocates worldwide.

Jones' passion and the Oaksterdam mission are interconnected, with an emphasis on providing the highest quality training for the cannabis sector. She believes that education will create the foundation for a political and social environment that supports cannabis policy reform.

A chance meeting led her to be introduced to Oaksterdam founder Richard Lee in 2008. Soon after, she began working for the university teaching classes in LA and Oakland. Oaksterdam was raided in 2012, and Lee was forcibly retired by the DEA. Jones was promoted to president and CEO and continued with a mission to protect the institution's reputation for cannabis education.

As the spokesperson and legislative liaison for the first statewide legalization initiative, the Prop 19 campaign in California, which sparked a global discussion in 2010, Jones provided the model for cannabis reform.





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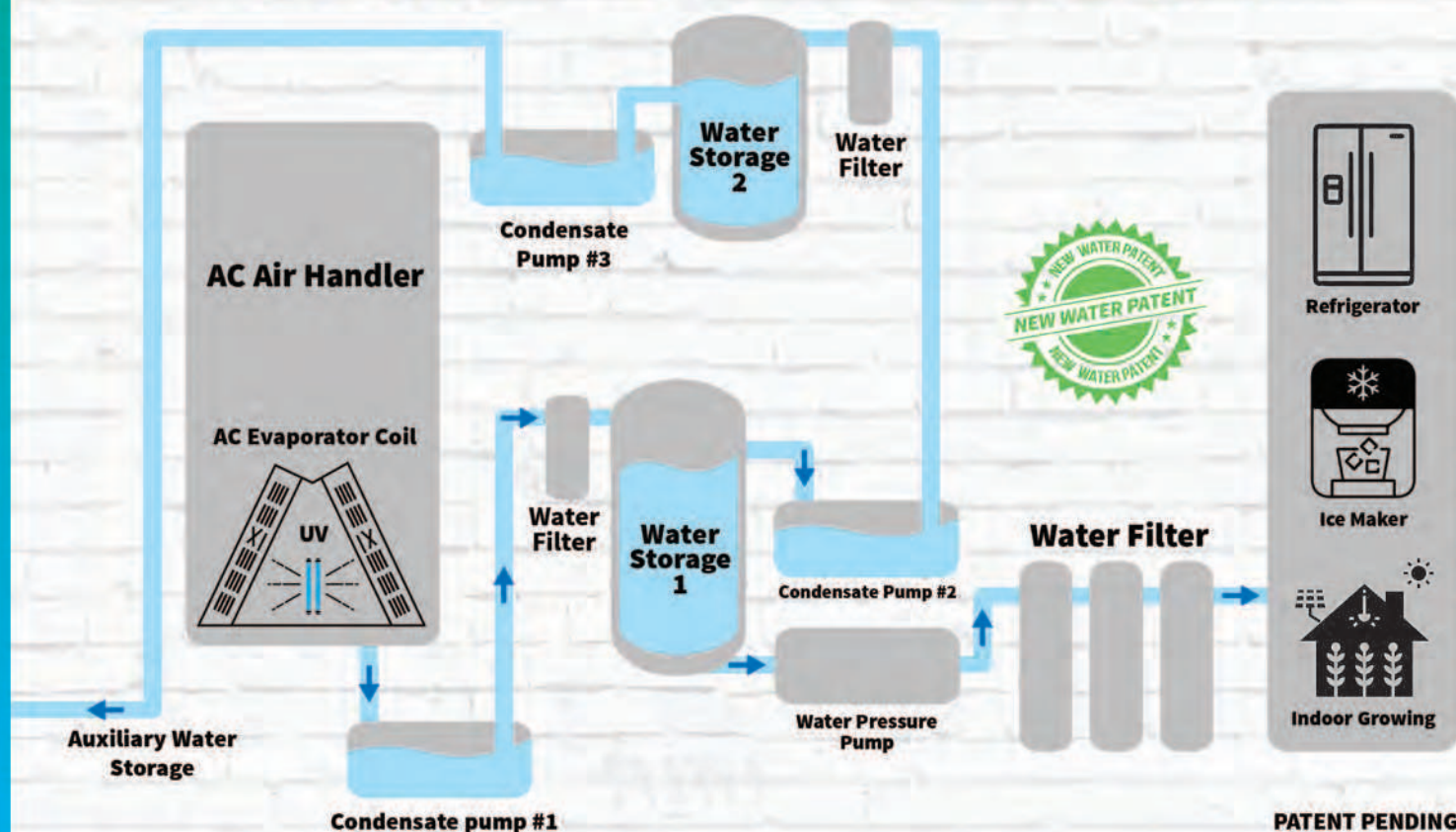
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KEITH STROUP

Keith Stroup has spent his professional life working to legalize cannabis. The attorney founded the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML) in Washington, DC in 1970 and has been a champion for change ever since. As a public interest attorney, Stroup has represented the interests of criminal defense attorneys, family farmers and artists, and cannabis smokers.

After graduating from law school in 1968, Stroup began working for the federal Consumer Product Safety Commission. Through this network, he connected with legendary consumer activist Ralph Nader, the inspiration for Stroup to create a consumer group for cannabis users. He pulled together some friends and colleagues who held similar pro-cannabis and anti-war interests and founded NORML in 1970 using \$5,000 in seed money from magazine publisher Hugh Hefner and the Playboy Foundation.

The partnership with Playboy would flourish, and for nearly a decade, Hefner provided NORML with \$100,000 annual funding and ads in his magazine.

Stroup served as executive director of NORML until 1979, during which time 11 states passed cannabis decriminalization laws. In 1995, Stroup returned to the NORML as its executive director.

His 2013 book on the history of NORML—*It's NORML To Smoke Pot: The 40-Year Fight For Marijuana Smokers' Rights*—examines the politics, tactics and significant figures in the legalization debate during the previous four decades.

**HALL
OF
FAME**



Melissa Etheridge is clear about her mission to help reduce the social stigma associated with cannabis. The Grammy Award-winning singer-songwriter is no stranger to activism, having been a loud and proud LGBTQ+ community activist since coming out publicly in 1993.

Etheridge has been smoking weed recreationally since she was 21 but didn't discover the drug had medicinal properties until 2004 when she was diagnosed with breast cancer. She underwent a lumpectomy, five rounds of chemo and radiation over the following year. Close friend David Crosby suggested she try cannabis as a medicinal aid to the adverse physiological effects of her chemotherapy. It helped alleviate her symptoms, and her perspective on the drug was forever changed. Etheridge has been breast cancer-free for close to two decades and credits her current good health, in part, to cannabis.

Etheridge is a vocal advocate of cannabis and is very open with her kids about using it. In 2017, Etheridge was featured in two documentaries: *Weed & The American Family* and *Mary Janes: The Women of Weed*. Both feature Etheridge talking about her openness to talking about cannabis and smoking it with her two eldest children.

Etheridge entered the cannabis industry in 2014 when she collaborated with Lisa Molyneux, proprietor of Greenway Compassionate Relief Inc. in Santa Cruz, CA, to create Know Label, which they legally had to refer to as a cannabis-infused tincture. The tincture was only available in California to those who held a medical script. In 2019, Etheridge co-founded Etheridge Farms with her wife Linda Wallem-Etheridge and two friends in Santa Cruz.



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DR. RAPHAEL MECHOULAM

Dr. Raphael Mechoulam is a well-known organic chemist, pharmacologist and Professor of Medicinal Chemistry at Hebrew University of Jerusalem. His contributions to the study of cannabinoids' chemistry and cannabis-based medicines have led him to be regarded as the father of medical cannabis research.

In the 1960s, Dr. Mechoulam started researching cannabis, focusing primarily on the pharmacology and chemistry of its cannabinoids. In addition to the discovery of THC in 1964, he isolated several other vital cannabinoids, including Cannabidiol (CBD), Cannabigerol, Cannabichromene, and Cannabinoid carboxylic acids.

The largest and one of the most critical biological receptor systems, the Endocannabinoid System (ECS), was identified in the late 1980s as a result of Dr. Mechoulam's discovery and study of THC.

The two primary cannabinoid receptors, CB1 and CB2, were discovered due to research conducted between 1988 and 1990 into the molecular characteristics of specific cannabinoids. Around the same time, he uncovered the expression of CB1 receptors in mammalian organs. Numerous medical searches for a substance that may activate these receptors resulted from this. Dr. Mechoulam was successful in locating the so-called endocannabinoids.

**HALL
OF
FAME**

RICKY WILLIAMS

Ricky Williams knows more than most how beneficial cannabis can be, both on and off the field. As someone who spent 11 seasons playing in the NFL, most notably for the Miami Dolphins, the former running back and longtime weed advocate used cannabis as a means of recovery from the pounding he took in the sport from 1999 to 2011, and knew other players used the plant to treat their pain and injuries.

Williams' football career was impressive. While attending the University of Texas at Austin, he won the 1998 Heisman Trophy, the award given to the best college football player in the nation. He'd go on to play for the Dolphins and New Orleans Saints.

Williams tested positive for cannabis several times during his career and notably failed several weed tests during the 2003 season. He turned his back on gridiron glory for good just before training camp in 2004 after the league fined him heavily and suspended him for four games for his cannabis use, and he became tarred with the "lazy stoner" stereotype.

Undeterred by people's ignorance, he left for Asia to study the origins of cannabis in the foothills of the Himalayas, where he spent time learning about the plant's healing properties and other botanical medicines. Williams cannabis brand, Highsman, is personally curated to complement moments in the day. Pregame is a sativa for an energized boost; Halftime is a hybrid for focused awareness and the Postgame Indica offers a relaxed mood.

"I launched Highsman to create a platform to tell positive, uplifting stories about cannabis use, to counter the false narrative and destroy the stigma," the two-time college All-American says. "This negative vibe surrounding cannabis is all bullshit; it's all invented. Besides all the BS around being suspended in football, cannabis has been such a positive experience in my life that has put me in touch with a higher purpose. What separates Highsman from other brands—including celebrity brands in the space—is definitely the positivity behind the brand."



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NIKKI LASTRETO & SWAMI CHAITANYA

Nikki Lastreto and Swami Chaitanya, co-founders of Swami Select, each have a strong cannabis history. Their love story spans decades and continents, starting in the Summer of Love in San Francisco's fabled Haight-Ashbury neighborhood and continuing via India to the Mendocino County hills and the iconic Emerald Cup. They both participate in political forums that impact legislation affecting small-batch cannabis growers in California and the surrounding Emerald Triangle, always speaking out for their fellow craft cannabis producers.

An East Coast academic, Swami first smoked cannabis in the spring of 1967 while studying at the University of Wisconsin. In 1969, Swami met with a teenage flower child named Nikki Lastreto.

In 1998, Swami undertook a Hindu initiation on the banks of the Ganges River. He changed his name from William Allen Winans to Swami Chaitanya and today is renowned as such among cannabis communities all over the state and beyond.

After returning to the US, Swami and Nikki purchased the secluded Turtle Creek Ranch in Mendocino County. It was in this magical place while smoking their weed and chatting with friends, including Tim Blake and others, thinking about what "legal pot" would look like: thus the Emerald Cup was born. They've helped Blake grow the competition from six judges, 30 entries and one vendor selling cannabis-related paraphernalia into the cornerstone experience that it is today.



SNOOP DOGG

HALL OF FAME



As one of the world's most famous rappers, Calvin Broadus Jr., aka Snoop Dogg, has been a pioneer and one of the leading celebrity faces of cannabis for what seems to be a lifetime. Throughout his career, Snoop's persona has changed dramatically from gangster rapper to Rastafari, entertainer to entrepreneur. His love for weed has never wavered.

Snoop's music frequently alludes to the sticky icky, from 1990s classics such as "Gin and Juice" to recent bops including "This Weed Iz Mine (ft Wiz Khalifa)." Snoop is known for his love of blunts and, according to legend, was introduced to them by fellow hip hop superstar Tupac Shakur. The story goes that the two met at a party for the film *Poetic Justice* in 1994—the same night that Snoop smoked his first blunt. Blunts and the Doggfather were a match made in heaven, and he famously once confirmed to smoke an impressive 81 blunts daily.

In 2015, Snoop turned his love of the plant into a range of business opportunities. He founded his venture capital firm Casa Verde which has managed to build a portfolio valued at \$200 million. Through Casa Verde, Snoop was one of the initial investors of Eaze, an Uber-style Californian-based cannabis delivery company.

Snoop launched Merry Jane at TechCrunch's 2015 Disrupt Conference to start normalizing the conversation around cannabis. Through the platform, Snoop has produced a range of highly successful content series for other networks and the website, including *Martha & Snoop's Potluck Dinner Party*, *Rolling With Rogen*, *Mary + Jane*, and Snoop's talk show, *Double G News Network*. Here, Snoop famously confessed to guest Jimmy Fallon that he has smoked weed in a bathroom at the White House. In November 2015, the Long Beach native became the first celebrity to front a line of personally branded weed products when he launched his eponymous cannabis line, Leafy by Snoop, in Colorado.

Snoop's commitment to campaigning for legalized cannabis has now reached the federal level. In 2021 he teamed up with cannabis prisoner activist and criminal justice reform boss Weldon Angelos from the Weldon Project and right-wing billionaire Charles Koch to form the Cannabis Freedom Alliance. They aim to persuade Republican lawmakers who are split on the issue or wholly opposed to legalizing cannabis to change their minds.

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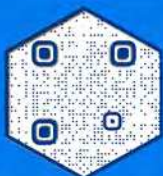
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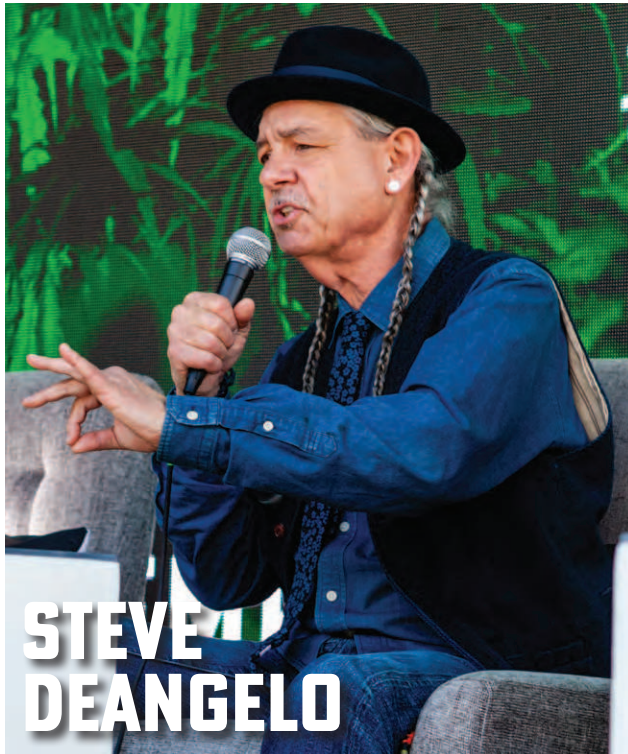


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**STEVE
DEANGELO**

A lifelong activist, entrepreneur, educator, author and investor, Steve DeAngelo was dubbed the “father of the legal cannabis industry” by Willie Brown, the former Speaker of the California Assembly and popular San Francisco mayor.

DeAngelo has spent four decades at the forefront of the cannabis reform movement. Among his most noteworthy accomplishments include co-founding Harborside, one of the first US dispensaries to receive a license, which is now a publicly traded company on the Canadian Securities Exchange with five locations in California; Steep Hill laboratories, the pioneering cannabis analytics firm; and Arcview Group, the first cannabis consulting firm. DeAngelo is the author of *The Cannabis Manifesto: A New Paradigm For Wellness*.

DeAngelo’s attempt to create a more ethical and politically engaged industry saw him deeply involved in the passing of Prop 64, California’s adult-use statute and Initiative 59, Washington DC’s medicinal cannabis law. DeAngelo also successfully defended several legal attempts by US federal authorities to shut down Harborside as part of a more considerable effort to close as many medical marijuana shops as possible.

In 2012, then-US Attorney Melinda Haag sued Harborside as part of a strategy known as “civil forfeiture,” which allowed the government to collect property from anyone breaking the law. DeAngelo and Harborside engaged in numerous legal battles with the US Department of Justice on behalf of the hundreds of California dispensaries that would be affected but lacked the resources to fight back against the feds themselves. The case against Harborside was dropped in 2016. In 2021, he launched The Last Prisoner Project, a non-profit dedicated to freeing prisoners convicted of cannabis crimes.

TOMMY CHONG

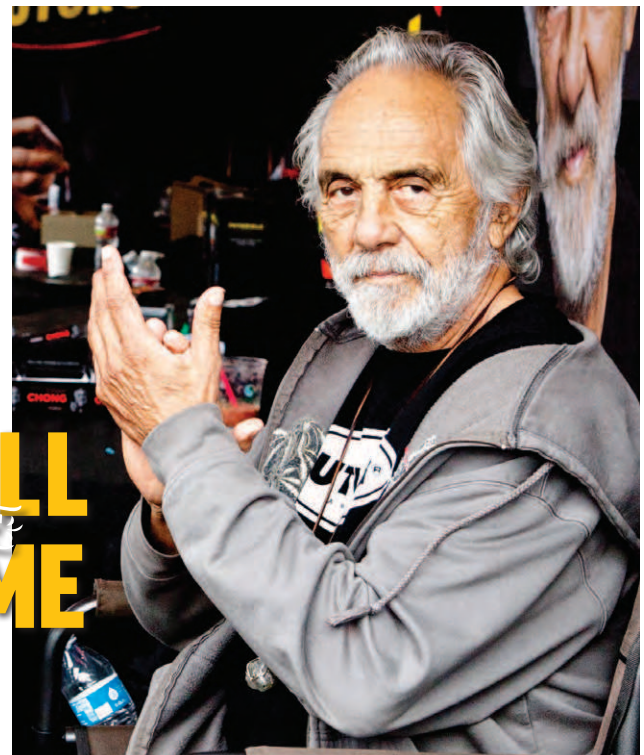
As one half of the most iconic Hollywood stoner duo of all time, Tommy Chong has spent his life standing up for cannabis. Lightning struck when he met and partnered with Richard “Cheech” Marin to establish the legendary comedy duo Cheech & Chong.

The pair dominated counterculture comedy throughout the ’70s and ’80s with their unique, first-of-its-kind stoner brand improv. Cheech & Chong starred in nine films together, including *Up in Smoke*, *Nice Dreams* and *Still Smokin*.

The feds indicted Chong in 2003 as part of Operation Pipe Dream, an investigation into the unlawful sale of drug paraphernalia, for his role in supporting and advertising Chong Glass Works/Nice Dreams, two California-based businesses founded by his son Paris.

After the passing of Prop 64 in 2016, which legalized cannabis for recreational use in California, Chong launched his brand of weed under the name Chong’s Choice, which features a robust line of CBD and THC products. Chong reunited with Cheech once again to create Cheech and Chong’s Cannabis, which provides flower and multiple other products in markets across the US. Additionally, the duo recently launched a cannabis delivery service, Cheech & Chong’s Takeout, that’ll be available throughout California.

The cinematic duo continue to prove their cultural relevance and appeal to a new generation of stoners. In 2022, Cheech and Chong presented the Red Hot Chili Peppers with the Global Icons Award at MTV’s Video Music Awards. Chong also recently received the inaugural Lifetime Achievement Award at the industry at the Cannabis Conference in Las Vegas.



**HALL
OF
FAME**



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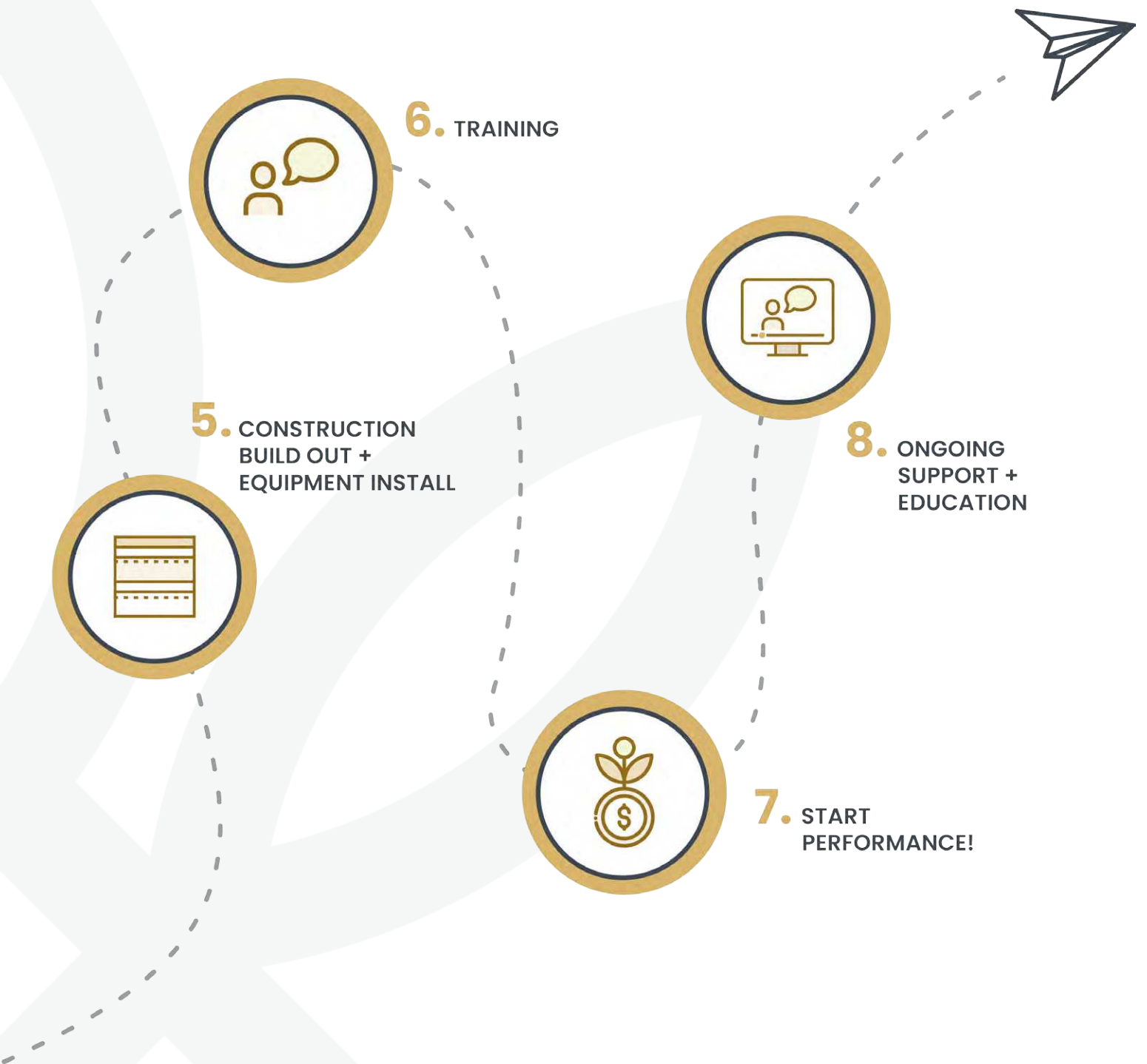
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IMPOSTOR

Posing as official smokebuddy merchandise.



FAKE AND COUNTERFEIT GOODS

\$ 1,000

CASH REWARD

Offering \$1000 reward for information leading to the distributors of counterfeit smokebuddy products. If you are contacted by unapproved sources or you have reason to believe you have a counterfeit Smokebuddy please contact us at [SMOKEBUDDY.COM/REWARD](https://smokebuddy.com/reward)

HIGH NOTE

Two *Cannabis Now* honorees got together for some quality puff-and-chat bro time at the Cannabis Collective Dispensary, a former Seattle-based dispensary. For more than a decade since this moment was captured, Tommy Chong (Legacy: Hall Of Fame) and Jared Mirsky (40 Under 40) continue to bridge the gap from weed icon to herb advocate effortlessly. As it should be. 

PHOTO BY ROMAN RIVERA



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BLACKBIRD

**the only pre-roll
machine that truly rolls.**

45k

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PER BOBBIN

< \$.03

PER PRE-ROLL

+ 750

PRE-ROLLS
PER HOUR



The Blackbird is an industry born, fully automated system, designed to tackle the quality and consistency issues with cannabis pre-rolls.

Blackbird meets the challenges of cannabis' physical properties while rolling consistent, reproducible, and uniform pre-rolls. In contrast, automated cone machines use vibratory force, gravity, and volumetric filling to stuff ground flower into pre-made cones.

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